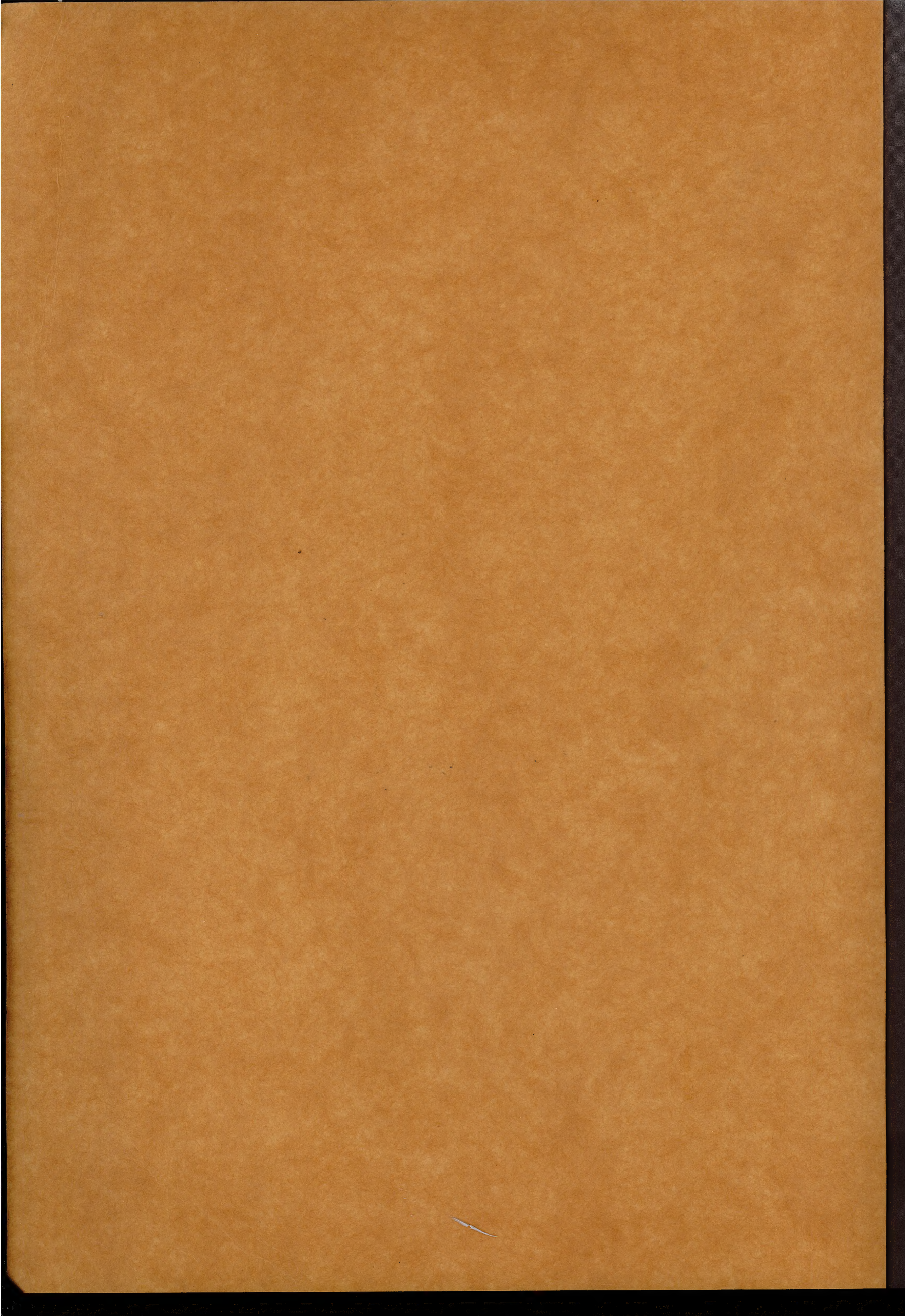


DEAR BOOKS TO PRISONERS:
Letters from the Incarcerated





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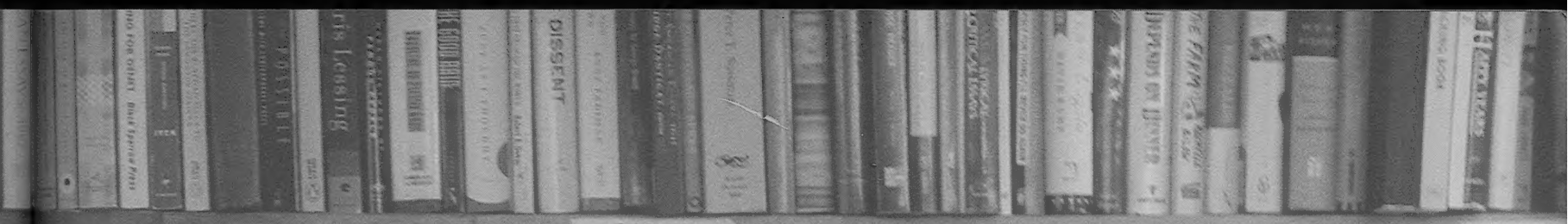
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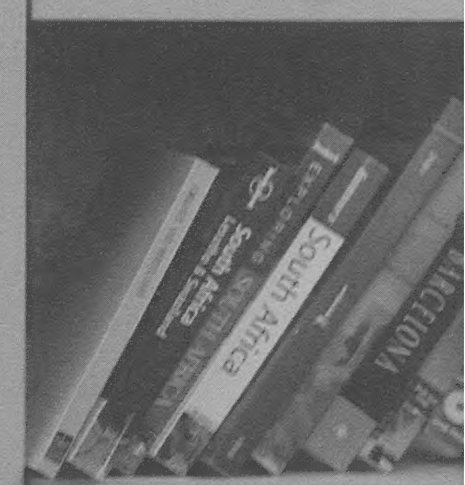
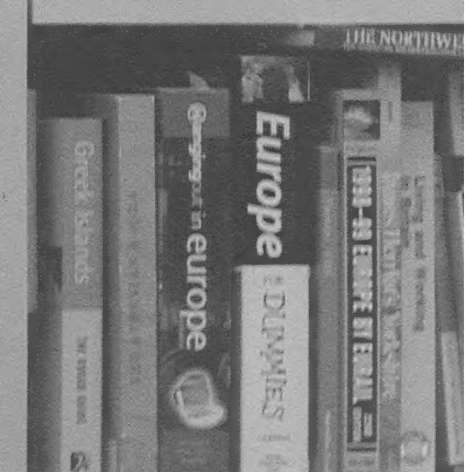
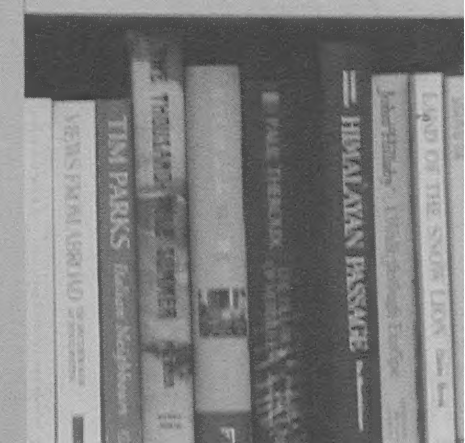
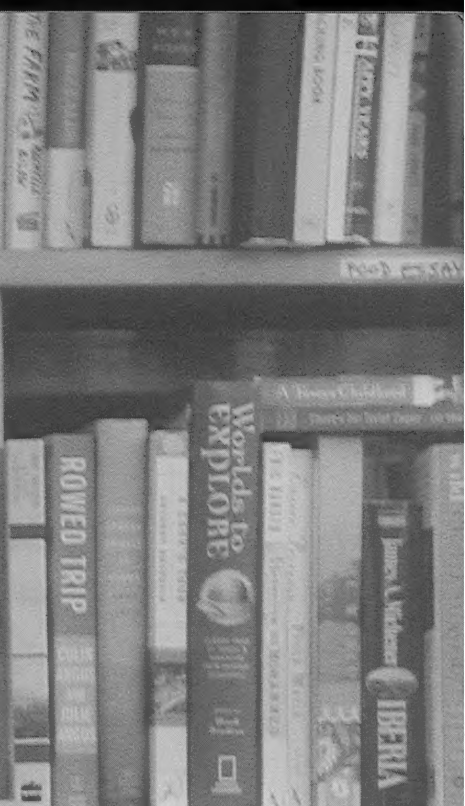
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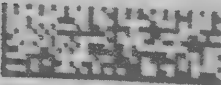
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DEAR BOOKS TO PRISONERS:
Letters from the Incarcerated

a Books to Prisoners publication

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LITERACY AND LIBERATION IN THE AMERICAN GULAG

Books are a point of gathering and a point of departure. In their pages one meets fantastical characters, the unbelievable true things in history, and the all-too-true depictions of human frailty and greatness that populate novels and poetry. Books are a meeting place, an opportunity for people to converse and commune, to share ideas and insights across what they have read and what they would like to read. And they are a launch pad, taking us to faraway places where we can laugh, love, dream, cry, and understand in ways we didn't know were possible.

Such power of books is magnified in prison. Their capacity to inform and to inspire, to ground and to escape, is even more urgent in an environment where people's mobility and access to information is constrained by armed guard, slabs of concrete, and rows of razor wire. In 1970, the imprisoned Black Panther George Jackson wrote that he "met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels, and Mao when I entered prison and they redeemed me." But the books needn't be political to provide a portal to the outside that prison otherwise denies. Reading, a woman in a North Carolina prison told scholar Megan Sweeney, "is my window."¹

The window of literacy has a checkered history in American incarceration. At their inception, American prisons were little more than slave camps. North and South, prisons forced people to labor under threat of harsh punishment. Where they were not premised on enslavement, prisons championed complete isolation on the mistaken idea that a lack of human contact would compel penitence. Instead, it imposed madness. Soon, even the total isolation prisons became labor camps and warehouses as well.²

1 George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*. (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1994 (1970); Megan Sweeney, *Reading is My Window: Books and the Art of Reading in a Women's Prison* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

2 Scott Christianson, *With Liberty for Some: Five Hundred Years of Imprisonment in America* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998); Jen Manion, *Liberty's Prisoners: Carceral Culture in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

3 Eric Cummins, *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

4 Dan Berger, *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

5 National Research Council, *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2014).

6 Marie Gottschalk, *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Heather Ann Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Decline, Crisis, and Transformation in Postwar American History," *Journal of American History*, 97:3 (2010), 703-734.

Things began to shift after World War II. Maybe, some officials thought, literacy could help reform the troubled souls in prison. California led the way in this regard with something called "bibliotherapy." The state equipped its institutions with libraries and encouraged their wards to read and write. Other facilities sponsored prisoner newspapers, where men and women could sharpen their skills by writing of goings-on in the institution.³

Bibliotherapy and related efforts were a tremendous success: many prisoners did take greater interest in literacy and what it offered. The problem, so far as the institutions were concerned, is that the tools of literacy cannot be so narrowly plied. "Knowledge," Frederick Douglass wrote, "unfits a child to be a slave." And so it was in prison as well. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, prisoners saw in their Bibles stories of courage and redemption. They saw in their lawbooks opportunities to reform their abysmal conditions. And they saw in their own experiences the chance to expose racism and violence in prison. They drafted books, started their own insurgent newspapers, and penned letters read by numerous supporters outside of prison.⁴

As significantly, they shared books with each other. They passed physical copies from cell to cell. And some even hand copied whole books—*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, *Soul on Ice*, *Soledad Brother*, and others—onto legal pads to make up for their limited number of copies of the books themselves.

The more than four-decade experiment now called "mass incarceration" was and remains a blow against this kind of insurgent literacy. Between 1973 and 2009, the American prison population exploded by 500%—from 200,000 people incarcerated in 1970 to more than 2.2 million in 2016. Approximately one out of every hundred Americans is in prison. The statistics are more sobering when considering the racial, economic, and gendered disparities. America's incarcerated are almost uniformly working class and disproportionately Black or Latino/a. One in nine Black men between the ages of 20 and 34 is incarcerated, making their rate of imprisonment six times greater than that of white men, while Latino and Native American men's rates of imprisonment are three and two times that of white men, respectively. In women's prisons, African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinas are also disproportionately incarcerated in comparison to their white counterparts at similar rates. Although much less data exists about transgender and gender non-conforming people's incarceration rates, a national self-reporting survey in 2011 found one in six of all respondents, and one in two African Americans, had previously served time in jail or prison.⁵

The extent of American imprisonment is stunning and distinctive; so is its character and reach. The United States is alone among industrialized nations in retaining the death penalty, making widespread use of life without parole sentences that function as an indirect death penalty, charging juveniles as adults and sentencing them to life in prison for crimes committed as teenagers, shackling incarcerated women during childbirth, and holding so many people (around 80,000 as of 2014) in solitary confinement, despite the demonstrated challenges that such isolation places on one's mental and physical health. The United Nations considers more than 15 days in solitary confinement to amount to torture, yet prisoners in the U.S. may spend decades in complete isolation. Since 2009, a Congressional act has required 34,000 immigrants to be detained on a daily basis, which has required arrests to stay apace with deportations.⁶

The problem extends far beyond the prison itself. In addition to the more than two million people incarcerated in prisons, jails, and detention centers, another five million are under some other form of correctional control, such as parole, probation, or house arrest. Upon release, former prisoners

with felony convictions encounter a dense web of laws that restrict their access to housing, employment, welfare benefits, and political participation. More than six million people were unable to vote in the 2016 presidential elections due to laws disenfranchising people with felony convictions—more than five times the number in 1976. Felony convictions currently prevent one in 40 otherwise eligible Americans from voting, and one in 13 voting-age African Americans. These restrictions also limit the jobs, educational opportunities, or housing options people with a conviction may access.⁷

These and other "invisible punishments" also destabilize the families, kinship networks, and wider communities and neighborhoods from where prisoners come and to where they may return. For example, despite their exclusion from the political process, prisoners are still counted as part of the overwhelmingly rural and white districts where they are incarcerated rather than the disproportionately urban and Black or Latino districts where they once lived and to where many of them will return. And among the myriad consequences for families is the reality that imprisonment has become a significant driver of foster care cases and permanent losses of parental rights.⁸

This attack on the rights of incarcerated people has limited literacy options. Prisons installed televisions and reduced their libraries. The protests and lawsuits waged between the 1960s and 1980s expanded some First Amendment protections to prisoners, especially in reducing censorship of letters and books. Yet subsequent court cases restricted many such rights. The 1994 Prison Litigation Reform Act curtailed options for prisoner lawsuits, while the Supreme Court in 2006 held that states could deny newspapers, magazines, and other reading material to those in Level II solitary confinement. And on and on: prisons have sought to shore up their power by denying people literacy. Even where literacy has not been denied outright, officials have tried to limit the available books to urban fiction and romance novels—fine genres in and of themselves, but telling that prison officials want to shut out other kinds of reading material.⁹

Such attacks make the work of organizations like Books to Prisoners necessary. These volunteer initiatives have sprouted up around the country; some have folded over the years, but many, including the one in Seattle, have withstood the decades. Their longevity provides a counter-history of mass incarceration: proof positive that literacy continues to empower men, women, and others in prison. It is certainly the case that providing reading material won't break bars. But it might bend them. It won't stop police or prosecutors. But it might counter them. It can't abolish isolation. But it can spark conversation.

Books cannot provide liberation. But without them, liberation is impossible.

Written by Dan Berger, 2017.

Dan Berger is the author or editor of several books, including *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era* and *Rethinking the American Prison Movement*. He teaches history and ethnic studies at the University of Washington Bothell.

7 Jean Chung, "Felony Disenfranchisement: A Primer," *Sentencing Project* (May 10, 2016) <http://www.sentencing-project.org/publications/felony-disenfranchisement-a-primer/>; Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

8 Mauer, Marc and Meda Chesney-Lind, eds., *Invisible Punishment: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Incarceration* (New York: The New Press, 2002).

9 Colin Dayan, *The Law Is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Keramet Reiter, *23/7: Pelican Bay Prison and the Rise of Long-Term Solitary Confinement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

1 Timothy Inklebarger, "Restricting Books behind Bars," *American Libraries*, June 1, 2018.

2 Bernadette Rabuy and Daniel Kopf, *Prisons of Poverty: Uncovering the Pre-incarceration Incomes of the Imprisoned*, report, July 9, 2015, accessed October 8, 2018, www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/income.html.

3 Tammi Arford, "Captive Knowledge: Censorship and Control in Prison Libraries" (Ph.D. diss., Northeastern University, 2013).

4 According to our internal survey results from 2017, conducted with inmates from roughly 150 federal facilities, 74.15% report restrictions on library visits if in solitary; among those, 23.65% report no other access to the prison library books.

The first question that people often have for Books to Prisoners is, why you? Why aren't family members or friends going to thrift shops and mailing books to loved ones? The answer is quite simple: they are banned from making this simple gesture. Citing security concerns, prison systems only allow books that arrive from approved vendors¹—generally expensive, brand-new books shipped from large, online vendors. Given the staggeringly high rates of indigence among inmates and their families,² it is unreasonable to expect families to be able to regularly purchase these materials.

Surely then, there are other resources available within the prison system for inmates to rely on? Unfortunately, that's not the case either. Many prison libraries are underresourced, and access to these libraries are often restricted based on a number of factors that are beyond an inmate's control.³ In many instances, those in solitary confinement have no access to books outside their cells.⁴

Books to Prisoners steps in to provide a free alternative. We send packages of books at no cost to an inmate or their family. In order to alleviate the financial burden that already comes with postage, packing material, and printed materials (such as invoices), we rely mostly on donated literatures. We've grown a motley collection over the years as a result, and our library stocks everything from travel guides and instruction manuals to vampire romance novels and comic books.

We receive 1,000 to 1,300 requests for books each month. The most popular requests are dictionaries, thesauruses, African-American history and fiction, Native American studies, legal materials, GED materials, and foreign language learning materials (particularly Spanish). Other common requests include genre fiction such as westerns and horror, vocational-technical manuals, politics, anthropology, art and drawing books (including blank notebooks), and books on paranormal phenomena.

Our organization is entirely volunteer run. Volunteers read the request letters and comb through the library of books to find the best possible selection to send. These books are then packaged by the staff and mailed out at the end of each week.

In the spring of 2015, we decided to put out a call. With each package of books that we mailed, we inserted a note—an invitation—asking inmates to express in their own words what this exchange meant for them and how it affected their lives behind bars.

This is a selection of responses from those who have written back.

Written by Michelle Dillon & Bo-Won Keum, 2017.

Michelle Dillon served as Books to Prisoners' program coordinator from 2014 to 2017. She managed 300+ volunteers annually, including volunteer groups and interns, and wrote the majority of its state and federal grant proposals. She now works for the Human Rights Defense Center.

Bo-Won Keum is an artist, educator, and designer who came to this project with the help of several grants from the Rhode Island School of Design. She is the researcher and editor of this book.

Enjoy your book and please send us your feedback in return!

In an effort to raise funds and awareness for the work that we do at *Books to Prisoners*, we are hoping to put together a published book of letters from people who have received books from us. Please send us a letter letting us know what this service means to you or anything you want us and others to know about how receiving these books has affected your life. Feel free to express your feelings about *Books to Prisoners* in writing, drawing, poetry, comics, or any other format that you wish. We need your permission to publish your letters, so please write at the top of the letter: BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER and make sure to sign it. You can also let us know if you want us to use your real name in the book, otherwise all submissions will be kept anonymous. By submitting your work to us, you are giving permission for it to potentially be used in other media distributed by Books to Prisoners, including publication on our website.

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We're looking forward to hearing from you!



I. WE ARE MEN, NOT NUMBERS

“I started my sentence in 1978 when I was 21 years old... Here I am at 58 years old much wiser and calmer now thanks to people who care enough to share books to those of us forgotten by society and who can't afford to purchase books.

If only I had access to books back when I was a young man, who knows who I might be today or where!”

PAGE 27

“The next thing I knew I had travelled around the world and educated myself.”

Many prisoners address Left Bank Books in their letters. In order to run its operations, Books to Prisoners partners with Left Bank Books, a bookstore located at 92 Pike Street in the heart of Pike Place Market in Seattle, WA.

April 8th

BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS my permission
to print this.

an open letter to all.

I Started my
Sentence in 1978 when I was 21 yr. old
I was wild and kept adding time to my
Sentence.

I started Reading Books to pass
the time while serving my numerous
Segregation sentences for fighting-drinking-
and the next thing I knew I had traveled
around the world and Educated myself.
Here I am at 58 yr. old much wiser and
Calmer now thanks to people who care enough
to share Books to those of us forgotten by
Society and who can't afford to purchase
Books. if only I had access to Books
back when I was young man, who knows
who I might be today or where!

these are great
and Caring people at Left bank books and
I'm proud to call them Friends of mine.
they have made my life worth living.
Thank Each and Everyone of you.

Sincerely

LEBANON OH. 45036

"SHORTY"
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#17163856
2605 STATE ST.
SALEM, OR. 97310
34 yrs. old, 6'5",
270 lbs., TATTOO
ARTIST
(REL. DATE NOV. 15)

"If it wasn't for Books to Prisoners, I wouldn't ever receive any mail.

Thank you for giving the mailman a reason to stop at my cell door."

Prisoners write their book requests to Books to Prisoners by hand and then tuck the letter in an envelope. Sometimes, the envelope will include an extra note or a picture.

"BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER, POEM,
[REDACTED], PICTURE, ETC."

"YOU MAY ALSO USE MY
REAL NAME AND ADDRESS"

20 "4.6.15"

Dear Books to Prisoners... (4.6.15)

Hi, MY NAME IS JUSTIN DAVIS,
S.I.D. # 17163856, D.O.B. 4/18/1980. I
AM CURRENTLY FINISHING UP ABOUT 7 MONTHS
LEFT ON A 2 YEAR PRISON SENTENCE. I WOULD *
LIKE EVERYONE TO KNOW WHAT AN AMAZING
PROGRAM "BOOKS TO PRISONERS" C/O: LEFT
BANK BOOKS IS, AND WHAT IT MEANS TO ME.
I AM 35 YEARS OLD WITH ABSOLUTELY NO FRIENDS,
FAMILY, OR OUTSIDE HELP OF ANY KIND. I AM
A PROFESSIONAL TATTOO ARTIST ON THE STREETS,
AND LEFT BANK BOOKS HAS HELPED ME WITH
● BOOKS RELATED TO DRAWING, ARTWORK, SELF-
HELP, AND ANY OTHER SUBJECT I HAVE
INQUIRED ABOUT. I AM A COMPLETELY INDIGENT;
"BROKE AS A JOKE", INMATE AND CANNOT AFFORD A
SINGLE BOOK ON MY OWN. WITHOUT A T.V. FAMILY
OR A LOVED ONE TO WRITE, 23 HRS. A DAY, IN MY
CELL CAN GET EXTREMELY LONELY AND MONOTANOUS.
IF IT WASNT FOR BOOKS TO PRISONER I WOULDN'T
EVER RECIEVE ANY MAIL.

THANK YOU FOR GIVING THE MAILMAN
A REASON TO STOP AT MY CELL DOOR, AND A BOOK TO
BREAK THE BOREDOM. WHO PEOPLE AND YOUR
HELP IS GREATLY APPRECIATED. HERE IS A POEM
I WROTE ABOUT HOW LONELY IT GETS WITHOUT
MAIL, AND A CARD/PICTURE. I HOPE YOU ENJOY
● IT.

Sincerely

AND RESPECTFULLY,

JUSTIN QUINN DAVIS #17163856
2605 STATE STREET

(SALEM, OREGON, 97310)



"Please keep on doing this, it impacts us inmates and means more than anyone on the other side of these walls could possibly understand."

People in deep poverty are disproportionately incarcerated.¹ Life lived in economically depressed areas without solid pathways to education or employment will lead to a situation where one is unable to access and afford the best legal representation.

If one is very poor, chances are that one's family is also poor. Many families of the incarcerated are unable to provide for books, materials, and other basic things that one would need in a situation of confinement.

"Books to Prisoners has my permission to publish this letter."
Paul H. 2015

to Books to prisoners,

2/26/15

I Appreciate the Books I've received, there perfect and exactly what I was looking for. Unfortunately in the Jail that I'm currently located in, it's very hard to receive Books, unless ordered online & directly from the source and shipped straight to the Jail. Right now with me in Jail and my family struggling on the outside, there is really no extra money to buy or send me Books therefore I truly appreciate what you've sent me. Please keep on doing this, it impacts us inmates and means more than anyone on the outside of these walls could possibly understand. God Bless, and thank you!

Sincerely and Respectfully

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Please send me the publication if you decide to use my letter thank you. It IS ok to use my name.

“What was a real shock was that you actually sent me every book I asked for.”

Anthony's shock is not unwarranted. Books to Prisoners operates almost entirely on sending donated books; thus, meeting the demand for specific books is always a challenge.

" Books to Prisoners has my permission to publish this letter.

X *Anthony Dankworth* #0178823.

3/5/15

Dear Book to Prisoners,

I just wanted you to know how grateful I am for the books you sent. What was a real shock was that you actually sent me every book I asked for. Thank You! Wow, I must say that, that real shows me that you not only read the letters you get (requests for books) but that you care. Being in prison you just don't run across such kindness. Mostly outside agencies that a prisoner writes to for assistance or help. They treat them as prisoners but you treat me as a fellow human being that's in need. I only wish that more organizations followed your model, and have such caring staff. An educated prisoner tends not to come back to prison. As Texas sees no need in this, I am glad you can provide the avenues to me. I will be passing your address on to my fellow prisoners. As most love to read, I only hope you have the adequate staff for the letters coming.

Thanks for being there, when most have given up on us prisoners. May God Bless everything you touch!!

Sincerely,

P.S. You have permission to use my name and address if you like to.

Anthony Dankworth #0178823
Anthony Dankworth
ET Terrell Unit
1300 FM 655
Rosharon, Tx 77583

“Through a book, we are, for a short time, whole again... we are men. Not numbers.”

Minimum, medium, and high-security prisons are all designed differently to hold inmates convicted of different classes of crimes, each incorporating different levels of security, program needs, and staffing requirements. Minimum and medium-security facilities, for example, both provide more opportunities for inmates to work in-house jobs than maximum-security prisons do. The level of security facility can also dictate how inmates are housed, be it in dormitories or individual cells.

One can be placed in a high-security prison as a medium-custody inmate. This means one is eligible for placement at a work camp with a secure perimeter, but is not eligible for placement in an outside work assignment without armed supervision.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

BOOKS TO PRISONERS

% Left Bank Bookstore & Publishing
92 PIKE STREET, Box A
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98101

April 28, 2015

RE: Book Request: BTP MAY PUBLISH THIS LETTER

Dear Friends In Books,

Greetings ☺ Wow, talk about way to much time to write y'all ☺ sorry. Ok, thank you for the three books (THE METAMORPHOSIS by KAFKA; RED HOT by AUDREY FRIEND; and A MIST OF PROPHECIES by STEVEN SAYLOR), all three were a hit in High Security - which I'm no longer in ☺ I get to feel the sun on my skin again ☺ - and were on their "convict" way to Seg. So to present opened windows to men that haven't walked in the sun light for years.

How do I explain what books, magazines, etc. mean to people kept in cages? I don't. If you have never been locked up and faced the mental, emotional, and physical..... never ending void of tenseness and complete powerlessness about, well everything, my trying would be a waste of words.

Just know that something to read - anything - while locked up can ease whatever your going through, whatever your facing. A book - we prisoners relive freedom in them. With a book - we are no long "inside" of a concrete block. Through a book - we are, for a short time, whole again.... we are... men. Not #1413337.

Thank you for every book ☺ Thank you for every magazine ☺ Comic book ☺ Fiction and Non Fiction ☺ Thank you for all all of you do ☺

I am now in Medium Custody (I go outside now ☺), and though I spend most of each day looking out of a window at an open field and razor wire from my cell (I left every book, mag, etc. I had in High Security), I am still doing all I can for (☺ ssshhh don't tell anyone) the Masked Librarian (no officer, I don't know anything about books and magazines traveling around the prison freely ☺ wink), but to do a better job I am in need of some books and magazines.

Sci-Fi
Action Thriller
Horror

Comedy
Mystery
Fantasy Fiction

Strait Fiction
National Gea Mags
Popular Science Mags

True Life Stories

stuff by writers like:

David Weber
Stephen King
Dean Koontz

André Norton
Terry Brooks
R.A. Salvatore

H.G. Wells
John Case
Jake ~~Mc~~ Cavaghan

Stephen Coonts
etc.
etc.

now about the Count of Monte Cristo ^{OO} by Alexander, things ~~are~~ along that line. Y'all have better understanding of what you have on hand - in fact, one of you might come across a book that you've read and believe is a really good book (once read a book by a lady about her trip to China - "Lay Me Down....?" really good non-fiction book - very very popular with my fellow prisoners) (it was chosen by one of you and sent on a whim ^{OO}) and most likely - you will be right. So y'all do that magic y'all do and please send some books and mags. Always remember, what ever you send me - at least another 20 prisoners will read.

Any way let me close for now - oh, yeah, hey the unit wide lock down / security search is coming up (everyone will be confined to their cells till the guards are finished searching the prison and going through all of our stuff - so please, if at all possible get a big package of reading materials here sometime in May ^{OO})

Be good, be real, be true, be you. Your friend and comrade and fellow book lover (who is it a 260 day count down to FREEDOM ^{OO}), thank you for everything. Good day.

Man In A Cage

~~_____~~

~~_____~~

O.S.B.

a seeker...

Beware of all dealings with demons,
talking puppies, people selling used
bubble'gum, and other men's wives.



II. IT'S LIKE YOU'RE TAKING ME OUT TO THE MOVIES

“Long days in a single cell can really play mean tricks on a mind without books to keep it occupied...

With every book you send me it's like you're taking me out to the movies.”

PAGE 65

“The women here read books
and pass them around until
they fall apart.”

Mentioned are inmate favorites James Patterson,
Stephen King and Ann Rule. Jonathan Grisham,
Tom Clancy, Michael Connelly, and Dan Brown are
also frequently requested authors.

BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PER-
MISSION TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER
Please do not use my name.

Dear BKS TO PRISONERS,

Thank you so much for the books! When I received the pkg I let out a little yelp of happiness. Prisoners love to receive mail; but to get BOOKS was a real treat! The women here love to read. We "pass-around" bks - we read them + pass them around until they FALL Apart. I often joke that I will read just about anything - I like gathering information & to be honest - reading is an escape to a different (better) world. Also, it helps to pass the time. I find

that I actually enjoy
reading about Politics &
American History (who would
have thought)

We have our favorite authors,
such as Stephen King, James
Patterson & Ann Rule, but
really most of us will read
anything. My cell-mate is
reading "Great Expectations"
by Charles Dickens

Again, thank you ever so
much. You made my day.

March 1, 2015

“It felt like it was Christmas
yesterday when I received the
books you sent me.”

Many inmates describe the moment of receiving a
book as similar to that of getting a Christmas gift.

Books to Prisoners has my
permission to publish of
this letter. You can use my ~~name~~
as well.

I felt like it was
Christmas yesterday when
I received the books you
sent me. I can not thank
you enough. Words to
justify my appreciation
are hard to find.

Reading gives me the
ability to focus on life
in a much more
positive way than my
reality does. To slip
into an alternative
story than my own is
such a blessing.

You and what you do
for us is a blessing
I can't thank you
enough

Sincerely Janny
Sumrell
#20522793

“I don’t have anyone left on the streets. I’m doing natural life.”

Many people get confused when distinguishing a life sentence from a natural life sentence, as they sound extremely similar. When a defendant is sentenced to life in prison, they will be eligible for parole after they have served 25 years behind bars.

In contrast, an offender who is given a natural life prison sentence will live the rest of their life in a jail cell, until the day they die.

Books to Prisoners Has My Permission to Publish this Letter.

I just wanted to write you AND say how much I appreciated the books you sent me.

I don't have anyone left on the streets. I'm doing natural life AND the service you provide for people like myself is so appreciated I find myself almost at a loss for words to express my gratitude to you.

You MAY USE MY REAL NAME IN ANYTHING you wish to publish it in.

There isn't much that I can find happiness in my life, but knowing that there ARE people in the world that take time out of their own lives to make such a big difference in my life by doing what you do I find inspiring. I have these two words for you, Thank You, that means so much more than you can ever know.

Your book program allows me to travel outside of my circumstance by giving me something to READ. I READ AND RE-READ what you send until I can remember the stories in my head for the times I can't get new books. Then I pass them along to the next man AND ask that he does the same when he's done. That way your books help me AND then many others.

Many people on the outside will never know how much what you do affects us at (pg 1)

much more than a superficial level. Just knowing that there are people willing to help us does change the way we see the world. How could it be otherwise.

Every action has effects that can't be measured, and yours will do nothing but spread positivity.

Again my thanks to you ~~now~~ now and always.

With My Respect's,
[REDACTED]

"I love to read and it's how I
escape from being in a cell 24
hours a day."

Mark is in an isolation unit in a Super-Max
prison. This means that he is alone 23 to 24 hours
each day.² He eats alone. He bathes alone. He
sleeps alone. The most human 'interaction' occurs
through a small slot in a steel door.

"We go through rough phases where prison officials
don't want to provide us inmates in isolation
books," he writes. "Moreover, with budget cuts, or
maybe [as] a form of punishment, books are
cut from our unit."

Book To Prisoners Has My Pre
mission To Publish This Letter

Book To Prisoners
% Left Bank Books
92 Pike St., Box A
Seattle, WA 98101

March 25, 2015

From: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Draper, UT 84020

Dear Books To Prisoners:

As I write this heartfelt letter of appreciation to Books To Prisoners; I realized just how fortunate I am because of the individuals whom have shown kindness and generosity to prisoners which they don't know.

I cannot express my gratitude enough to each and every person who made it possible so I would have reading material (books)

during the holiday season. It was as if someone had remembered me at Christmas time. I felt as if I had received a gift from a loved one. The gift of these books touched my soul deeply.

I love to read and it's how I escape from being in a cell 24 hours a day. I am housed in an isolation unit (super-max) and we go through phases where prison officials don't want to provide us inmates in isolation books. Moreover, with budget cuts, or it maybe a form of punishment, books are cut from our unit. Which just so happened during this last holiday season.

For someone in society to totally understand the necessity of books in an isolation unit, they would almost need to experience it first hand. Books can save a man's sanity while in isolation. Just recently, I read a book called The Education of Little Tree that moved me to tears. I cried

like a little boy. It cleansed my soul. A story of a little Indian boy opened my heart and in turn opened feelings I had buried deep within myself.

The books that I've received from Books To Prisoners are first class books. I couldn't buy better books even if I had the means.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the individuals who provide financial support to Books To Prisoners, since I cannot, as I am indigent. In addition, my gratitude is extended to the individuals at Books To Prisoners for their kindness, dedication and efforts in bringing about a greater awareness for the need of books in prisons. These books are read over and over again. From one prisoner to another.

God bless all of you.

3 "Inmate Information Handbook Federal Bureau of Prisons," Federal Bureau of Prisons, November 2012, https://www.bop.gov/locations/institutions/spg/SPG_aohandbook.pdf (accessed October 28, 2018).

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

"I still can't believe I have a book of my own."

Different systems have slightly different regulations, but all federal prisons apply restrictions to articles of clothing, mementos of home, and items purchased through the commissary³ (such as food or notebooks). Clothing, for example, is often limited to certain colors, values, and styles in order to eliminate what prisons call signifiers of gang affiliations.⁴ These regulations are generally laid out in each prison's regulations documents. For example, inmates within the Federal Bureau of Prisons are restricted to a maximum of 25 loose photographs and one photo album kept in their possession.⁵

Prisons claim that too many items increase the risk of liability for the prison, including fire hazards.

Books To Prisoners has my permission to publish this letter
To whom It may Concern, *Paul*

I've just received my book today and I'm smiling from ear to ear. I can't express how this act of kindness does to my soul. Receiving this book lifts my spirit and I will truly enjoy reading every minute of it. My mind will travel away from being incarcerated when I'm reading my book. I'm going to treasure this book and the service of Books to Prisoners. I still can't believe I have a book of my own. I will always cherish this moment and my book. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. You can use my real name in the book. Once again thank you.

Sincerely,

Paul

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Angleton, Tx 77515

IT'S LIKE YOU'RE TAKING ME OUT TO THE MOVIES

“Kindness isn’t something you
see on Death Row.”

Books To Prisoners Has My PERMISSION to PUBLISH
THIS LETTER! [REDACTED]

Thanks, to the people who make Books To Prisoners Happen. I'm a
Prisoner on Death Row here in Texas. I get no surprises in the
mail, but an occasional letter. What a delight it was to open my
package & receive my Book & calendar. I was down & the surprise
gift brought a smile & lit up my heart. Kindness isn't something
you see on Death Row. The Book "The TRAIL OF PANAMA" was as
good as the movie & the calendar from Don's Day and League was & is
so cute & makes me smile every day! Your organization is
so awesome, I'm blessed to have found you. Kindness
is a gift you can only receive by giving it away!! Thanks
again for your benevolence & generosity, I'm pretty broke
but I've sent you 2 stamps that's all I can afford, I wish I
could send more! You are great, please keep up the awesome
work. you truly send happiness with each package!!

Your Brother - N. Clark
[REDACTED]

**“My dorm has over 130 women.
We have nothing but time.”**

Books to Prisoners receives over 15,000 letters a year from inmates of all kinds of demographics all over the country. According to its records, approximately 7–8% of the letters that Books to Prisoners has received recently are from incarcerated women. This is proportional to the percentage of incarcerated individuals in the United States who identify as women.⁶

MARCH 20, 2015

BOOKS TO PRISONERS % LEFT BANK BOOKS

924 PIKE STREET, BOX A

SEATTLE, WA 98101

HELLO, I AM WRITING TO SAY "THANK YOU" FOR THE BOOK
THAT I RECEIVED. MANY OF US HERE IN PRISON CAN'T
AFFORD TO BUY BOOKS, BUT WE ENJOY READING AND THE
CHANCE TO LEARN. ONCE A BOOK IS READ, WE PASS IT
TO ANOTHER INMATE (BY PUTTING IT ON OUR SHARED TABLE)
THIS MEANS A BOOK (ONE BOOK) IS OFTEN READ AND RE-
READ BY MANY OF THE INMATES IN OUR DORM. MY DORM
HAS OVER 130 WOMEN AND OTHER THINGS THAT WE DO
ARE WHERE THEY LEARN THE WORD OF GOD. THOSE BOOKS
MEAN A LOT TO US, WE HAVE NOTHING BUT TIME AND
READING IS A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY FOR US.
THANK YOU.

BOOKS TO INMATES HAS MY PERMISSION TO PUBLISH
THIS LETTER!

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO USE MY LETTER IN HOPE THAT
OTHERS WILL CONTRIBUTE BOOKS TO INMATES.

7 Valerie Kiebala and Sal Rodriguez, "FAQ," *Solitary Watch*, October 2018, <http://www.solitarywatch.org/facts/faq/> (accessed October 10, 2018).

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

"No TVs in seg, so it's that much more special."

Books are a particular lifeline to those who are held in solitary confinement. Incarcerated people held in solitary confinement (also known as administrative segregation or "ad seg") spend almost all of their time in a single cell that generally measures from 6 × 9 to 8 × 10 feet—the size of an average bathroom.⁷ Often, they are only allowed to leave the confines of their room for one hour a day, and only on five days out of each week.⁸ During this hour they are allowed to exercise in another room or a fenced outdoor area.⁹ In some facilities, prisoners cannot leave their cells even for phone calls, visits from family, or to go to the prison library.¹⁰

Books To Prisoners Has My Permission To Publish This Letter.
And Use My Real Name If They So Choose To. Eddie Fowler

Dear Books To Prisoners,

There's no way to really thank you enough for the books you provide. For many of us it is the only escape from the everyday stress and anxieties prison life entails. Long days in a single cell can really play mean tricks on a mind without books to keep it occupied. Thanks. I really appreciate all that you've done and continue to do for me. With every book you send me it's like you're taking me out to the movies. No TV's in seg. so it's that much more special.... And I've learned alot from them as well.

Thanks again. I'll be in touch.

With Respect,
Eddie Fowler #1552808
Eddie R. Fowler
3001 S. Emily Dr.
Beerville, Texas 78102

III. PRISONS CAN BE USED LIKE UNIVERSITIES IF THE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE RIGHT



“I’ve been locked up since I was a teenager. Everything I know about the right and wrong way to live, I had to find out while I’ve been incarcerated...

It can be said that children go in and wild animals come out, but it doesn’t have to be like that.”

PAGE 87

11 Justin George, "What Are Inmates Learning in Prison? Not Much." *The Marshall Project*, May 31 2017, <http://www.themarshallproject.org/2017/05/31/what-are-inmates-learning-in-prison-not-much/> (accessed October 10, 2018).

"Books are tools to educate myself."

This inmate writes, "You have been assisting with books on how to be a successful entrepreneur once I get out."

With a decline in funding and a rise in for-profit prisons, many inmates have limited access to high quality rehabilitation programs.¹¹ Books to Prisoners often fulfills this role by sending instructional materials to those who request them.

BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION TO PUBLISH
THIS LETTER

DEAR BOOKS TO PRISONERS,

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR HELPING AND SUPPLYING
ME WITH THE TOOLS (BOOKS) TO EDUCATE MYSELF.
I'M SCHEDULED TO BE RELEASED IN THE NEAR
FUTURE AND YOU HAVE BEEN ASSISTING WITH
BOOKS ON HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR
ONCE I GET OUT. I'M VERY GRATEFUL TO YOU AND I
APPRECIATE YOUR GUIDANCE AND HOSPITALITY, THANK
YOU FOR EVERYTHING.

"When I get out I'll hopefully continue in helping fight for the human rights of the voiceless."

Books to Prisoners provides hope to the many people who are able to use the books they receive for self-education and to build their futures.

The John B. Connally Unit is a maximum-security prison for males located in Karnes County, Texas. The facility has a maximum capacity of 2,148 inmates. Of the 602 employees, only 7 serve as education employees: roughly one for every 300 prisoners.¹²

Dear Books to Prisoners:

My name is [redacted] and I'd like to thank you very much for the service you've provided to me. As an indigent, incarcerated individual, the books you've sent to me have profoundly helped me educate myself behind bars. Those books have helped me transform myself to be a productive member of society. Not only that, that knowledge has helped me build study groups in here and when I get out I'll hopefully continue in helping fight for the human rights of the voiceless.

My favorite subject is Economics and if you have any books in that area it'll be greatly appreciated. Books to Prisoners has my permission to publish this letter!

Sincerely,
[redacted]



“I plan to join your efforts by providing small things like books and study materials.”

Books to Prisoners often asks for donations in stamps. Many prisoners respond with stamps that are available in their facility.

To: Books to Prisoners

5/16/2015

I would like to offer my most
Sincere thanks to ~~about~~ Books to
prisoners Everyone HAS Been Hearing About
the Good things you guys HAVE done
it means A Great deal to us Behind the
wall. I'll Be on the Streets Again soon. And
I plan to join your efforts to Help people
during time by providing small things like
Books & Study material thanks Again

[Redacted Signature]

Books to prisoners HAS my permission to
publish this Letter

x)

[Redacted Signature]

P.S. enclosed is 5 purple Heart Stamps

“I get out soon and got some dreams I want to see through to fruition.”

Self-expression doesn't stop at the prison gate. People want to express their gratitude and have only a pen and paper with which to do that.

And with the long stretches of time yawning in front of most of our patrons, why not spend it developing artistic skills?

Hey Ya'll,

08/31/15

IT'S BEEN NINE MONTHS & BEFORE I GO ASKIN FOR MORE BOOKS I THOUGHT I'D SIT DOWN & TAKE A SEC TO JOT DOWN AN OFFICIAL THANK YOU. SO ENCLOSED, PLEASE FIND A SINCERE LETTER OF APPRECIATION FOR YA'US SERVICES & KINDNESS. FEEL FREE TO PUBLISH IT.

I'M STILL INTERESTED IN YOGA IF YOU FIND YOU HAVE ANY BOOKS ON THE SUBJECT THAT MIGHT HELP A BEGINNER LIKE ME LEARN SOME NEW POSES. SO FAR I'VE BEEN DOING A VERY BASIC VINYASA FLOW FROM MEMORY OF A YOUTUBE VIDEO I USED TO USE TO HELP ME WHEN I WAS IN THE WORLD, JUST GETTING STARTED PRACTICING (FYI MY MEMORY SUCKS).

ALSO, I'VE SET MY HEART ON IMPROVING MY WRITING. I'D LIKE TO WRITE A NOVEL, OR MAYBE EVEN A SCREENPLAY OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. ANYTHING CREATIVE REALLY — POETRY — WHATEVER. I'M JUST TRYING TO FIND WAYS TO EXPRESS MYSELF YA KNOW? ANY BOOKS THAT WOULD HELP IN THIS ARENA WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

FINALLY, IT'S TIME TO TAKE MY 20 PLUS YEARS OF STUDY OF THE SUBJECT OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT, PRUNE MY LIFE OF SOME THINGS (& SOME PEOPLE), & BECOME THE MAN I WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE & START GIVING BACK. I'M FAMILIAR WITH FUNDRAISING THANKS TO FAMILY, BUT WHAT I'D REALLY LIKE TO FAMILIARIZE MYSELF WITH IS THE HOW-TO OF STARTING & RUNNING A NON-PROFIT. IF YOU COULD HELP ME OUT WITH SOMETHING LIKE THIS THEN I WOULD BE AMAZINGLY GRATEFUL. I GET OUT SOON (9 mo) & GOT SOME DREAMS I WANT TO SEE THROUGH TO FRUITION.

OK, SOME TITLES JUST IN CASE ALL ELSE FAILS: THE SCIENCE OF BEING GREAT BY WALLACE WATKINS I THINK, NEGOTIATE THIS. BY HERB COHEN, HOW TO

ARISE & WIN EVERYTIME - SURPRISINGLY NOT MALICIOUS IN ANY WAY.
ALL OF WHICH I'VE READ AT SOME POINT, BUT WOULD LOVE TO HAVE TO READ
AGAIN - LIKE THE 7 HABITS - IT NEVER GETS OLD.

ANYWAY, THANKS AGAIN FOR ALL YOU DO. AND GOD BLESS YA'U. IT'S
A REALLY GREAT THING YA'U ARE DOING.

Sincerely,

P.S. NOW START A PEN-PAL SERVICE & SIGN
ME UP! ☺

“I want to study home building
and home improvement.”

Books to Prisoners has my permission to publish this letter.

Thank you so much for the home improvement book. It is above and beyond what I expected.

I want to study home building and home improvement to help with my future of being a productive citizen of society by being able to get a job in construction with knowledge about the trade. Plus I have a future plan for my retirement of finding some cheap run down homes, buying them, fixing them up, and renting them out or even reselling them for profit.

Thank you again for the book. It is a great help for my studies and future.

Sincerely,



04-16-15

[Redacted address block]

Snyder TX 79549

Books to Prisoners has my permission to publish this letter

“I want to one day relocate to a French-speaking country where I can start a new life.”

Inmates often request language-learning materials. In many cases, Books to Prisoners is able to provide useful materials in the requested language and level of study. Because Books to Prisoners relies on donations, sometimes the requests cannot be matched or can be fulfilled only with a combination of entry-level textbooks.

Books to Prisoners
% Left Bank Books
92 Pike St., Box A
Seattle, WA 98101

March 3, 2015

(Books To Prisoners Has My Permission
To Publish This Letter)

10 years ago, when I entered the penal system, I set goals for myself, one being to learn a new language. I chose French which was crazy because I'm in Texas, the land of the southern drawl. Spanish would've been easier but I wasn't looking for easy. I wanted a challenge and thanks to services like Book to prisoners, I'm now able to read, write and speak in French, albeit not great, but a native French person told me that they were impressed with my level of understanding French.

Books to Prisoners has made it possible for this inner-city person, who's never travelled outside the states, learn to appreciate other cultures. Now, I've added another goal which Books to Prisoners probably can't help with and that is to one day relocate to either a French speaking country or where francophones live where I can ~~start~~ start a new life. To simply put it Books to prisoners does provide, what many correctional systems has abandoned in lieu of profit and that is, a way to learn things that will better the inmate or even entertain him or her. Thanks Book To Prisoners!

Sincerely,

Lonnie Hilson, Texas (L.O.K. to print name)

**"Spanish is now my second
language. I'm a student for life."**

Books for learning Spanish are the most commonly requested. Other common language-material requests are for Japanese and American Sign Language.

Some prison systems at various points in time have attempted to restrict books in other languages, particularly ASL, because of concerns about inmates using "code."¹³

BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER

07/07/15

Dear Friends at Books to Prisoners/Left Bank Books:

Thank you for making a difference in my life by donating books on 08/07/13 and on 07/07/15. On 08/07/13 you sent "Elements of Style" and "Oxford Spanish Wordpack." Today I received "Merriam-Webster's Compact Spanish-English Dictionary" and "501 Spanish Verbs."

Oxford Spanish Wordpack has been a big blessing to me. It is permanently part of my personal library. Spanish is my second language. I'm a student for life. I love the people and the language.

The book 501 Spanish Verbs is a huge help in translating. I asked specifically for the book and you sent it. Although the Department of Public Safety limits the number of books we can have, my personal library is in good shape. Again, thanks a lot/muchas gracias.

Never doubt that you are a blessing in the lives of many.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]
[Redacted Address]

“Prisons can be used
like universities if the
circumstances are right.”

10-4

BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION TO PRINT THIS LETTER

I've been locked up since I was a teenager. I've had to grow up while I've been in prison. Everything I know about the right and wrong way to live, how to recognize mistakes before they're made and learn from those of others, and who to learn the things I don't know from, I have had to find out while I've been incarcerated.

Prisons can be used like universities if the circumstances are right. It has been said that children go in and wild animals come out, but it doesn't have to be like that. I am fortunate enough to have found a niche in the system where I can focus on learning and building a future for myself. Books are crucial for this; without them, no matter what I would like to do, I do not have access to the information most people take for granted.

With access to books, I can learn

2

anything I want. Languages and ideas skills I can use at work or to go back to school when I get out, are all open to me. Books to Prisoners has been crucial to this, and to letting me leave prison a better person than I was when I came in.

Sadly, I am in the minority. Resources like Books to Prisoners are a sort of rarity in the system, and most prisoners most of the time can do little but watch time pass. I only wish that more people had the luxury I do of being able to use their time well.

[REDACTED]
Bowling Green, MO



IV. THE ONLY CHANCE OF HOPE TO ESCAPE

“[It’s] the only chance of hope to
escape the madness prisons are
known for.

I am free as I chase word by
word, page by page!”

PAGE 111

“It’s an escape to wherever your mind takes you, as long as it’s away from the chaos.”

• Books to Prisoners has my permission to publish
• use of my real name is permitted this letter

6/11/15

To Whom It May Concern:

Earlier this week, I received two books that were donated to me by Books to Prisoners. Ironically, they came at a time when I'm stuck in segregation w/o much to read - so I view the delivery as a small blessing.

I'd like to thank you for your dedication & hard work in reaching out to ~~the~~ us. You have no idea how much a single book can be worth to someone in such dark situations as we (inmates) are; it's literally a breath of fresh air; & an escape to wherever your mind takes you, as long as it's away from the chaos.

I hope that others who write feel as I do, & hope you continue to grow w/ much success in your mission. I will surely pass these books to others, & am beginning my first one tonight.

Thank you again. Plz find enclosed (4) USA Forever Stamps as a donation to help reach others in need.

Louis Ruggiero #57013018
LSCI - Allenwood
P.O. Box 1000

Sincerely,
Louis Ruggiero

“The books are wonderful
and an excellent distraction
from prison life.”

April 15, 2015

Books to Prisoners
c/o Left Bank Books
Box A
92 Pike Street
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: Book receipt feedback

Books to Prisoners:

Please accept this letter as sincere thanks for the excellent books mailed in response to my request. They are wonderful and an excellent distraction from prison life. Used books allowed.

Each of the two books I received will be read by me and offered to other inmates for reading enjoyment or donated to the institution inmate library. They are sincerely appreciated and will receive internal **distribution** around the institution.

Please accept this letter as my acknowledgement of Books to Prisoners dedication to an unfortunate segment of the population; prison inmates. Books to Prisoners efforts and donations of sponsors are sincerely appreciated and shared to their maximum benefit to prisoners. Please continue your outreach efforts.

Please note BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER and inquiries are welcome and invited by my real name.

Sincerely,



Carl Tisthammer
Reg No 46827-112
Federal Correctional Complex
P O Box 1000
Petersburg, VA 23804-1000

“I get so many envious looks from others...”

Comic books are one of the most commonly requested items. Unfortunately, they are also heavily regulated, as officials are quick to censor material that they deem violent or inappropriate.

Thinking
OF YOU TODAY...



Getting Books Through the mail
From you guys are so special
that it just makes my day
for at lease 3 days And I get
So many envious looks from
Others as to what did you get
to can I read that when
your finished.

And Comics there is such a
Demand for, I think some people
would be surprised at how many
me still read comics, I believe
its because it transports a person
Back in Time to better place than
he is now. At lease for a little
while.

"BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION
TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER"

12/28/2015

...AND *praying* YOU KNOW

JUST HOW *special* YOU ARE.

HAPPY
HOLIDAYS
LEFT BANK BOOK STORE
AND
VOLUNTEERS

"...The God of love and peace shall be with you."

II CORINTHIANS 13:11 KJV

North Carolina, 2015



Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, King James Version.

72160-0601

www.dayspring.com

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SILOAM SPRINGS
ARKANSAS
MADE IN CHINA

NG CARDS
PRINGS
SAS
CHINA

“I don’t have to buy a passport, airline ticket, or stand in long lines waiting to be searched by some machine.

All I have to do is sit back, open a *National Geographic* and enjoy.”

Inmates often request for *National Geographic* issues, along with other travel magazines and books about geographic locations.

- Books To Prisoners Has My Permission To Publish

This Letter -

Handy,

Yes, you folks can use my real name in your book, no problem with that.

Have really enjoyed receiving all the National Geographic Magazines that you folks have sent to me at my request.

They are very educational, interesting, enjoyable to read, and they take you all over the world with all sorts of stories.

When I read one I feel as though I'm actually tagging along with the person writing the article and the photographer taking the pictures.

I don't have to buy a passport, airline tickets or stand in long lines waiting to be searched by some machine. All I have to do is sit back, open a National Geographic and enjoy.

It's really neat, taking a trip and not leaving this unit!!

Thank You

76367

“Too many inmates just give up.

But you do your best
to help us all to keep going.”

DEAR BOOKS TO PRISONERS,

JUNE 26TH.

JUST RECEIVED TWO NICE BOOKS. I CERTAINLY THANK-YOU. WHAT A BLESSING. LITERATURE IS THE ONLY THING THAT ALLOWS US TO ESCAPE OUR ENVIRONMENT FOR AWHILE. IT ALSO KEEPS OUR MINDS SHARP. TO MANY IN MATES JUST GIVE UP. BUT YOU DO YOUR BEST TO HELP US ALL TO KEEP GOING. I THANK-YOU FROM MY HEART. ENCLOSED ARE FOUR STAMPS. HOPE THEY HELP.

RESPECTFULLY

IF YOU SO DESIRE YOU MAY USE THIS. YOU HAVE MY WRITTEN PERMISSION. DATED 6/26/15

1038650

“Thank you for the history books you sent me this month.

It has been wonderful to continue my knowledge of history and also use my time here constructively.”

TRULINCS 63126112 - TYNON, DANIEL NELSON - Unit: TCP-S-A

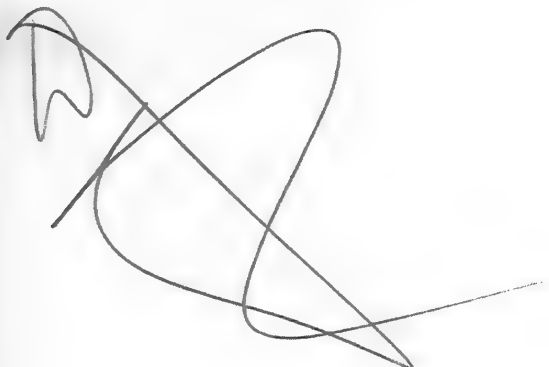
FROM: 63126112
TO:
SUBJECT: Books to Prisoners
DATE: 02/24/2015 06:02:33 PM

Left Bank Books,

I wish to thank you for the two history books you sent me this month. It has been wonderful to continue my knowledge of history and also use my time here constructively. Your kindness and generosity is much appreciated. This is a very worthy program and it is my hope that it proves to be a success for your business. Again, thank you

Daniel Tynon

You may use my name as you wish

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Daniel Tynon', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

“[It’s] the only chance of hope
to escape the madness prisons
are known for.

I am free as I chase word by
word, page by page!

500, 1000, even 2000 pages are
never enough.”

Books To Prisoners Has My Permission To Publish This Letter.

I just want to let it be know, I Francisco U. Perez 1223945 of Tx's penial system on Coffield Unit. Owe a great part of my sane time to this program and other's like them, that have taken the time to give hope, love, redemption and freedom to inmates like me by one of the things we take for granted. A Book! By my placement in Ad. Seg. has put a hand ship on my mental health and even though I can get a book from unit library. They do and give us the want. Ploying with the only chance of hope to escape the madness prisons are known for. But because of you and the care you are willing to give someone that don't deserve anything. You show there is hope somewhere in all this darkness and I being hunted by spies or have a battle with the supernatural. I am free as I chase word by word, page by page. In my 12 years I have found peace for once, even when its short lived because 500, 1000, even 2000 pages are never long enough. No matter how many times I reread it, Thank You! From early on I hated books and up until 07 when I retok my GED I had a 3rd grade reading avange. But since I've been on lock you can't find me without a book in my hand. I just hope out there somewhere, when you read these words you will see what these people mean to us, and just maybe you will take to heart that not all on lock are animals some where so ~~childish~~ and foolish that we ~~throw~~ away the one thing we all need in this world. Hope! I hope that you will help these programs by anyway you can to help them expand so not just some states are able to get this blessing but be able to spread it world wide. Because of people in these programs for inmates. I can hear from people I call my friends. I look forward for words from Steve Erikson, Jim Butcher, Laurell K. Hamilton, Kim Harrison, Janet Evanovich, Dean Koontz and on on on I can name some of my best friend fantasy authors. And from time to time a new friend come along. But I hold dear to ever word given and spread this blessing I call hope. You may want to see it as you want but in the end we all hope for something these Books give us. Mine is Hope in Freedom. I'm free to go again to anywhere I want and something as simple as a book gives me that. So for the next 28 years of my sentence. Please don't let this gift die.

Thank You For your Time!

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Address]



V. ALL SOCIETY IS NOT AGAINST ME

“It is not only the books that I appreciate; more important to me is the appreciation that I have for you that you would even think of, or care about, other people that are incarcerated.

To many people, except for family or close friends, prisoners are out-of-sight, out-of-mind.”

PAGE 117

“For many in here, crime is not
a lifestyle...

Many made a very bad, stupid
decision or choice without
forethought and on impulse.”

Mr. Duane Tackett
GDC # 428659
Telfair State Prison^{H-9},
P.O. Box 549
Helena, Gra. 31037

Dear Sir/Ma'am:

I recently received the two (2) books that you sent me at my request. I would like to convey my thanks to you and my deep appreciation. However, it is not only the books that I appreciate; more importantly, to me, it is the appreciation that I have ^{for} you that you would even think of, or care about, other people that are incarcerated. To many people, except for family or close friends, it is "out-of-sight, out-of-mind". I would dare to say that most people do not take the time to think of, or be concerned about the needs of those imprisoned. For many in here, crime is not a life-style to be repeated; as with myself, many made a very bad, stupid decision or choice without forthought and on impulse. To much of society we are criminals and deserve what we get, and to be honest, this is true. But to what extent? After what point does punishment turn to ~~an~~ inhuman cruelty?

As stated, I appreciate you all and the work you are doing. I will honor your request and

(over)

and not ask for any additional books for at least nine (9) months.

I can not afford much, but in order to help your worthy cause, at least a little-bit, I am including ^{eight 8} ~~six 6~~ stamps. Maybe it will help others.

I close with once again saying, "Thanks!!" 😊

Sincerely:

Wesley Teeshet

P.S. You do have my permission to keep, print, or do anything else with this letter; yes, even using my name if you wish.

P.P.S. If you happen to spot any of the "Game of Throne" series (Fantasy) I would love it if you could 'snatch' them for me, especially part I and II. "I'm just sayin'!" 😊 ^{HA} The author is George R. Martin.

“I’ve written to lots of people about lots of things during my incarceration, and it’s pretty much all been in vain.”

It is often difficult for people who are incarcerated to find details on current resources such as book programs or legal resources.

News on the inside trickles through slowly. Much information is outdated or based on rumor, and inactive organizations continue to receive mail at addresses that have not been current for years.

Books to Prisoners does its best to compile and distribute informal resource lists on everything from pen pal sites to LGBTQ support groups to help those who are in need.

Books to prisoners has my permission to publish this letter.
And you can use my real name.

☐ CNMCF/CMRU/CMU
P.O. Drawer 1328
Los Lunas, NM 87031

☐ GCCF
P.O. Box 520
Santa Rosa, NM 88435

☐ LCCF
6900 W. Millen Dr.
Hobbs, NM 88244

☐ PNM
P.O. Box 1059
Santa Fe, NM 87504

☐ SNMCF
P.O. Box 639
Las Cruces, NM 88004

☒ SNMCF-POU
P.O. Box 20005
Las Cruces, NM 88004

☐ WNMCF
P.O. Drawer 250
Grants, NM 87020

☐ NENMDF
185 Doctor Michael Jenkins Rd.
Clayton, NM 88415

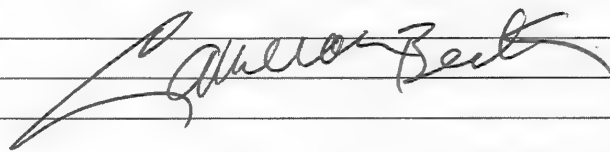
Name Cameron Beck
No. 61525 Unit B-611

Date: June 2015

Books to Prisoners,

Thank you so much for sending me my book. I really wasn't expecting it, because I've written to lots of people about lots of things during my incarceration, and it's pretty much all been in vain, as ~~a~~ virtually no one ever responds. Until now. It feels good to know that someone's out there, that someone cares enough to respond, and above all that there's people that care about literacy; I see very little of that around me. You guys are doing a great thing, so keep up the good work! And thanks again for the book, I love it.

Gratefully yours,



“We are thankful with all of you for not seeing us as criminals, but as needy peoples seeking for help and comprehension, love, and some kindness which we find in all of you.

Thank you very much—
*muchismas gracias mis
hermanos.”*

Books to Prisoners keeps an inventory of Spanish literature and reference materials, which are mostly used for inmates who are learning the language. But the organization will sometimes receive letters completely in Spanish, and will in such cases accommodate those requests with the Spanish books at hand.

BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION
TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER.

MY NAME IS [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I PREFER TO USE MY FULL NAME NOT
MY DOC NAME PLEASE. ~~ALL~~

This lines are in appreciation of your hard work and
dedication from all personnel that labor in this program
(ministry), you have been a blessing in my life and I'm
sure in so many others, and even if you don't receive
to much people responding, please don't be of desccourage.
(I personal believe that many Spanish speaking (writing)
brothers are not going to doubt because of language
barrier, as you can see in my own writing, but I
decide to do it, because I'm so thankful to God that
He has place people and program like this to be of
a grate help an beneficial in our dark days in this
place. like you did with this book: A 2nd HELPING OF
CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL, I received it 4 days
ago and it is of a grate medicine for my broken heart,
because even do we were the one who for cause the
problem, damage, hurt, you add everything that it comes
to your mind, yes! we did that, we also were hurting
souls. Before coming to this place but we did not
know it yet til now, my point is we are thank full
with all of you for not see us as criminals, but as
needy peoples seeking for help and comprehension, love and
some kindness wich we find in all of you.

Thank you very very much, (muchisimas gracias mis hermanos)
with much love and respect (con mucho amor y respeto)

[REDACTED]

“It’s reassuring to know that
even though I am behind bars
for a crime against society,
all society is not against me.”

Books to Prisoners has Permission to Publish
This Letter Daniel Behrman
signature

6/28/15

To Whom it may Concern:

I wanted to thank you for the books that you sent and to tell you that it does matter. It matters that you take the time and give the effort to help out prisoners. Sometimes it's easy to forget (from the inside) that there are people who care and that there are good people out there rooting for us and trying to help us better ourselves. (in this case - through the power of books)

I for one am grateful for your kindness. It's reassuring to know that even though I am behind bars for a crime against society: all society is not against me.

I am a convicted burglar and do not feel good about my crime. I did a desperate thing at a desperate time.

Thank you again for all that you do. I really wanted you to know that it does matter.

Sincerely

Daniel Behrman Daniel Behrman

You may use my real name — Thank you

“Your program reminds me that there are people in the world who do not look down upon a person for his mistakes.”

From: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

83707

To: Books To Prisoners
c/o Left Bank Books
92 Pike St. Box A
Seattle, Wa.
98101

BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER

May 18,--2015

Dear Books To Prisoners,

I would like to thank you for your generous gift of the Whole Truth by David Baldacci. It has brought me hours of escape from a dreary existence behind bars. I have passed the book on for others' enjoyment while incarcerated.

Your program is greatly appreciated to me as it gives me the opportunity to receive mail but reminds me that there are people in the world who do not look down upon a person for his mistakes.

Thank you for your generous gift and I hope to help your cause with a donation as soon as the opportunity arises.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



VI. I STILL REMEMBER MY FIRST DAY
AT PRISON

“I still remember my first day
of prison.

Just the idea that I had so much
time to do in this tiny cell
was more than I could handle.”

PAGE 135

14 Wendy Sawyer, "How Much Do Incarcerated People Earn in Each State?" *States of Incarceration: The Global Context 2016, Prison Policy Initiative*, April 10, 2017, <http://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2017/04/10/wages/> (accessed October 19, 2018)

15 Ibid.

“I make \$25 a month if I’m lucky, so the ability to get books is zero. I can barely afford soap at times.

I realize I did wrong; however, prison cannot just be a waste of time.”

Inmates often make less than \$1 an hour. In North Carolina, inmates can be paid as little as 5 cents per hour, or 40 cents for an eight hour day.¹⁴

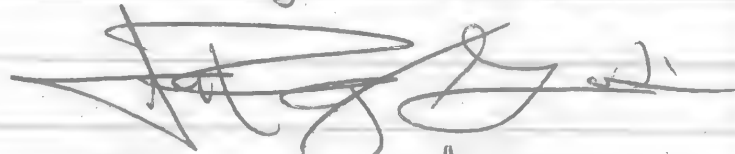
It's little wonder that prisoners cannot gather funds to purchase books from outside vendors: inmates are responsible for buying their own toiletries and other items (such as religious materials, shoes, and sometime stationery). In some prisons, inmates are also charged for their own housing and meals or ordered to pay into a victim's compensation fund.¹⁵

Books to prisoners has my permission to publish this letter and use my real name.

I would first like to take time to thank you for your donation. I make \$25 a month, if I'm lucky so the ability to get books is zero. I can barely afford soap, at times. I am going to be here for 20 years because I enjoyed playing on the computer. I realize I did wrong, however prison can not just be a waste of time. Many people here gamble, drink, smoke and watch TV all day but I prefer to use my time to better myself. I keep fit, meditate, do yoga, and study. Most of my time is spent on the latter. However, there is a limit to how many introductory physics books one can read before the topic gets boring. I have enough time to master physics, math, and oui, even French. There just isn't much here to study. Your donation was greatly appreciated and many a few people here will benefit from your kindness. With any luck this will help the world indirectly. I am including what I can to pay it forward and hope you are still available to help anyone who wishes to better themselves. I will continue to study with hopes that college scholarships one day become abundant again. ~~I am including an idea for a patent that, if you can do anything with it, will make you all money to continue your work.~~

P.S. I can't send this out via legal mail so enjoy some stamps instead. Sadly I welcome hate mail + encouragement since my family doesn't even write

Always Greatful


JaRoy Gilmer #44355-037

(FL)

“I now teach others in prison and
I share with them the books
I receive through the Books to
Prisoners organization.”

BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER
like

TO: BOOKS TO PRISONERS

40 LEFT BANK BOOKS

92 PIKE ST., BOX A

SEATTLE, WA 98101

APRIL 21, 2015

FROM: DAVE GORDON 877573

TELECOM UNIT

3899 JH 98

NEW BOSTON, TX. 75570

DEAR FRIENDS,

IN JUST A FEW MORE DAYS I WILL BEGIN MY SEVENTEENTH YEAR IN PRISON. I STILL REMEMBER MY FIRST DAY OF PRISON. JUST THE IDEA THAT I HAD SO MUCH TIME TO DO IN THIS TINY CELL WAS MORE THAN I COULD HANDLE. I KNEW I COULDN'T SURVIVE ALL BY MYSELF, SO I REACHED OUT AND FOUND THE BOOKS TO PRISONERS PROGRAM.

THE BOOKS I RECEIVED WERE LIKE WINDOWS THAT ALLOWED ME TO SEE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS, THAT TRULY ENRICHED MY SOUL. THESE BOOKS HELPED ME TO REALIZE WHAT HAPPENED INSIDE OF ME THAT LED ME ON A PATH TO PRISON, THEY ALSO HELPED ME TO REALIZE WHY SOCIETY LOCKED ME AWAY ~~IN~~ IN PRISON.

IN OUR SOCIETY, PRISON IS WHERE GOOD PEOPLE SEND OTHERS WHO DO THINGS THE GOOD PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND. THOSE OTHERS, LIKE ME, REMAIN IN PRISON UNTIL AN UNDERSTANDING CAN BE FOUND - OR ^{UNTIL} THE PRISONER DIES. I'M THANKFUL TO THE BOOKS TO PRISONERS ORGANIZATION FOR SENDING ME THE BOOKS I'VE NEEDED TO FIND THAT ELUSIVE UNDERSTANDING.

I NOW TEACH OTHERS IN PRISON AND I SHARE WITH THEM THE BOOKS I RECEIVE THROUGH THE BOOKS TO PRISONERS ORGANIZATION. THEY TELL ME THEY'VE TRAVELED TO FAR AWAY PLACES AND EVEN WENT BACK IN TIME TO MEET THE MOST AMAZING PEOPLE - ALL WITHOUT LEAVING THE CONFINES OF THEIR TINY CELL.

I KNOW IT PAINS THE GOOD PEOPLE OF SOCIETY TO EVEN THINK OF HAVING TO KEEP A FELLOW CITIZEN IN SUCH A CELL, BUT TO SEND THESE LOST SOULS BOOKS IS TO SEND THEM THE ROAD MAP THAT LEADS THEM TO THE UNDERSTANDING THAT FREES THEM.

THANK YOU FOR GENEROUSLY GIVING TO THE BOOKS TO PRISONERS ORGANIZATION. FOR IN GIVING TO THEM, YOU ENABLE PRISONERS LIKE ME TO GIVE BACK THE GIFT OF →

(2)

UNDERSTANDING - A GIFT THAT PROTECTS OTHER CITIZENS FROM
~~THEIR~~ BEGINNING THEIR SEVENTEENTH YEAR IN PRISON.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

P.S. I PRAY FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUCCESS!

“Prisoners lose touch with reality, causing them to become cold, distant, alienated, uncaring, and antisocial.”

In addition to the cost of postage, Books to Prisoners must pay for shipping materials such as poly-mailing bags, wrapping tape, and printed invoices. (Invoices are required by the prison to indicate the contents of the package and the fact that no money is due from the prisoner.)

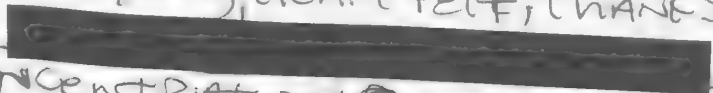

Given all of these costs a volume greater than of 10,000 packages each year, Books to Prisoners spends more than \$30,000 just on mailing packages of books. This is why donated books are so essential; with so much money dedicated to mailing costs, it is just not possible to routinely allocate a sufficient amount of money to purchase popular books such as brand-new dictionaries.

To: Books To Prisoners
c/o Left Bank Books
92 Pike St Box A
Seattle, WA 98101




1-OF-2

4-1-15

This Letter is composed for the Purpose of Expressing my undying, Heart Felt, THANKS To Books To Prisoners

I  At The Ramsey-I
Concentration Camp, 1100 Fm 655 Rosharon, TX 77583
give my Permission To Above Free Book Organization
To Use As They See Fit, ie. Promote Their Organization
Publish This  AS Part of A Book, OR What Ever They
WANT, it for, Positive Reasons.

The { Books To Prisoners c/o Left Bank Books 92 Pike St.
Box A Seattle, WA 98101 }

Has literally saved my sanity, By sending me Books
of Each + Every conceivable subject New, old All
in Perfect Condition. I'm self educated many of the
Books I've Received From "Books To Prisoners"
made this possible. DICTIONARIES, GRAMMER, HISTORY,
G.E.D, medical, you name it. You see I WAS confined
To Isolation/Ad-seg locked inside AN 8X12 + ALSO
AN 6X9 For 23 1/2 HOURS Per Day where A Disproportionate
AMOUNT OF Prisoners  loose touch with Reality CAUSING
Prisoners To Become Cold, Distant Alienated UNCaring
antisocial. I WAS, By The Grace of GOD, able to over-
come such unfortunate Fate Along with this selfless
concerned, giving, "Books To Prisoners" organization, these
People ARE like members of my family AS I see it. I've been
incarcerated since 1994 I began receiving Books of all
Type from "Books To Prisoners" around 2003, approximately
some 12 yrs at least. my family could NOT/can NOT afford to
buy + send me Books But "Books To Prisoners" Did, All those
years! THAT'S a lot of money!!! IF I JUST Add UP The Postage
By It Self Alone. without The Books!!! All those years!
The TOTAL would be astronomical to say the least.
Then add the cost of Each and Every single Book! People
IF ANY ONES making an impact on literacy, stamping out
illiteracy ~~to escape~~ This organization
"Books To Prisoners" is  Doing  so
in all honesty.

OVER


Rosharon, TX 77583

IF I COULD

2-OF-2

I would've donated money OR PROPERTY ANY
THING they'd accept. "BOOKS TO PRISONERS" ALL their
VOLUNTEES OVER the years (MANY VOLUNTEERS HAVE DONATED
their ENERGY, TIME, TO help me!! A man whom they
NEVER SEEN OR HEARD OF AND A "CONVICT OR AN
"OFFENDER" PLEASE USE my REAL NAME [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] AND FOR ANYONE WISHING TO CONTACT me, ANYONE
-AT ALL ABOUT THIS FACTUAL LETTER OF THANKS TO ALL
OF WHO makes up the STAFF OF "BOOKS TO PRISONERS" PLEASE
DO SO. [REDACTED]

POEM TO:
BOOKS TO PRISONERS
CO LEFT BANK BOOKS 92 PIKE ST
BOX A, SEATTLE, WA 98101

THANK YOU ALL FOR LENDING MATERIAL + BOOKS
BIG + SMALL

AND THIS WAS COMPOSED FOR YOU.
EACH WORD SINCERE, TRUE.

THANKS TO YOU ALL. I'm MORE EDUCATED.
THIS ALLOWS me TO BE ~~ACADEMIC~~ LITERATE
ACADEMIC, DEDICATED.

WHILE THERE ARE MANY WHO CLAIM they'd
HELP PRISONERS, IF ONLY they KNEW WHAT TO DO

IF ANY ARE SINCERE, ITS AS SIMPLE AS MAKING
A DONATION OF SOME TYPE TO YOU.

By [REDACTED] Alan Leely

“Sometimes I feel without
the books I receive I might
go crazy.”

4 12.15

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
SALVANNEE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

5964 US HIGHWAY 90

LIVE OAK, FL. 32060

BOOK 10 PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION TO PUBLISH THIS LETTER.

MY NAME'S DEMETRIUS I'M AN INMATE IN A PRISON IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA. I'VE BEEN RECEIVING BOOKS FROM "BOOKS 10 PRISONERS % LEFT BANK BOOKS" FOR ABOUT 2 YEARS NOW, THEY'RE A KIND OF LIFE LINE TO ME AND OTHERS. WHY I SAY THEY'RE A KIND OF LIFE LINE IS I'M ON WHAT IS CALLED "CM" IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA IT'S A LONG TERM CONFINEMENT, I'M LOCKED IN A CELL 24HR A DAY THAT IS THE SIZE OF 2 HOUSE BATHROOMS, I ONLY COME OUT OR ALLOWED OUT 3 TIMES A WEEK FOR OUTSIDE REC 1 HOUR EACH TIME, SO WHILE I'M LOCKED IN MY CELL READING IS ALL I CAN DO TO PASS TIME. WE GOT A SAYING ON MY UNIT "DON'T LET THE DOOR EAT AT YOUR MIND" AND THE WAY I DO THIS AS WELL AS OTHERS IS TO TAKE ^{OUR} ~~THE~~ MIND SOMEWHERE ELSE BY READING, SOMETIMES I FEEL WITHOUT THE BOOKS I RECEIVE I MIGHT GO CRAZY SO I SAY THANKS TO ALL THE PEOPLE AT "BOOKS 10 PRISONERS % LEFT BANK BOOKS" FOR WHAT YALL DO AND PLEASE KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

THANK YOU.

[REDACTED]

“As I watch the sunset on the
razor sharp fence, I think
deep down inside and remember
things I miss.”

Books to Prisoners receives at least 2–3 pieces of art and poetry a week. People draw on envelopes; they write calligraphic messages. These works of art range from the simple to the incredibly complex, oftentimes presented as beautifully-expressed tributes to Books to Prisoners.

This inmate sent Books to Prisoners three poems, one of which is featured here.

"A STRONG THOUGHT *IN* TIME
AS *I* WATCH THE SUNSET ON THE
RAZOR SHARP FENCE I THINK DEEP
DOWN INSIDE AND REMEMBER THINGS
I MISS. WATCHING MY NEPHEW'S AND
NIECE'S AND MY KIDS PLAYING AND
HAVING LOTS OF FUN. SIPPING ON A COLD
DRINK IN THE SHADE AWAY FROM THE
SUN. WORKING VERY HARD FOR MY
FAMILY TO HAVE FOOD ON THE TABLE.
BEING HERE IN PRISON, I REALLY
LET MY FAMILY DOWN, 'CAUSE I AM
NOT ABLE TO HOLD THEM TIGHT, TELL THEM IT
WILL BE ALRIGHT WHEN IT RAINS. IT HURTS
ME INSIDE JUST TO KNOW THAT I CAUSE
MY FAMILY SO MUCH PAIN. I PRAY TO GOD THAT
HE HEARS MY CRIES AND FULFILLS MY
REQUEST TO SHOW ME THE RIGHT WAY OF
LIVING SO I CAN DO MY BEST FOR
MY HEAVENLY FATHER. "AMEN"
GOD BLESS

"We at ad-seg only get to come out of our cells maybe one or two times a week for one hour alone.

It's been like this for years because they say they don't have enough officers."

"Ad-Seg" is short for "administrative segregation." This is another term for solitary confinement.¹⁶

Books To PRISONERS has my permission to Publish this letter and use my NAME IN ANY WAY they WANT.

Books to PRISONERS,

5-4-15

Shadelepe ^{notant} III

I really want to thank you and all the people who make this book project possible. It really means a lot to all of us here in Administrative Segregation on the Allred unit here also TEXAS. We only get to come out of our cells MAYBE 1 or 2 times a week for 1 hr. Alone. It sound unreal but its true. Its been like this for years because they say they dont have enough officers. Ive been in Ad-SEG for 10 years without ever having had or been involved in any problems... If they claim you are a gang member you are locked up even without NO trouble. Well now we only get Books. NO TV. Phones, or Contact Visits. We are only by ourselves n. contact with NO one except officers. These Books really help pass the time and keeps our heads out of the Daily Drama that happens around here.

We have a Unit Library
which delivers a⁽¹⁾ book / time
a week when they are actually
open, which is about 6 months a year.
Once I finish these books I
try to pass (illegally) to others to
read. Back here books and magazines
are a way for us to get our minds
out of the day to day mess back
here. So thank you very much
for all you do to help people like
myself and others... your books help
people stay busy for a while reading
and keeps them and myself with our
minds on stuff other than prison mess.
Thank you and God Bless you.

Sincerely,

Guadalupe
Conatente III

P.S. If any Lawyer reads this
letter, EVERYTHING I say here
is true. ALL OF IT. ^{please} Help IF you CAN.

TDCT# 1381780
ALIRED UNIT
TEXAS.

17 Pilkington, Ed.
"Albert Woodfox released
from jail after 43 years
in solitary confinement."
The Guardian. February
19, 2016. Accessed
October 20, 2018. [https://
www.theguardian.com/
us-news/2016/feb/19/
albert-woodfox-released-
louisiana-jail-43-years-
solitary-confinement](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/feb/19/albert-woodfox-released-louisiana-jail-43-years-solitary-confinement).

"Thanks again for the books,
they were passed on and
enjoyed by at least 10 other
condemned inmates."

Death row inmates are generally in solitary
confinement, in conditions that can be difficult to
endure. Most prisoners on death row are placed
in solitary confinement until their execution, which
in some cases can be decades. Long-term solitary
confinement is not limited to those on death row;
a prisoner in Louisiana who was released in
2016 had spent the previous 43 years in solitary
confinement.¹⁷

According to our surveys, most people in solitary
confinement can access books only through a cart
and by mail. Their time out of the cell is spent in
concrete "recreational" areas and in the shower.

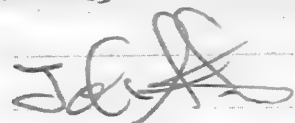
Books To Prisoners has my Permission
to Publish this letter Along with my
name and address

Books to Prisoners
92 Pike St Box A
Seattle, WA 98101

I Can not thank you enough For
the Books you Recently Sent. One of
the worse things about Being on Death
Row is Being locked in an 8' x 5' cell
around the clock Alone with very
little Intellectual Stimulation and the
mind numbing Sameness. Only through
Reading can I escape the Oppression.
Maybe Oppression is a bit severe but nonetheless
it's a very dull existence. The time I spend Reading
is my only escape. When I am absorbed in a
Book it's the only Reprieve I Get. I become
totally engrossed and vicariously experience what
ever the Characters are doing. Fiction, ironically
is the only Real World I Get.

Another issue with being on the Row is that we
Have very limited access to the prison library system.

Thanks again for the books, They were passed
on and enjoyed by at least 10 other condemned
Inmates.



John Sexton
Florida State Prison / Death Row
7819 NW 228th
Rail Road FL 26026

18 Rachael Kamel and Bonnie Kerness, "The Prison Inside the Prison: Control Units, Supermax Prisons, and Devices of Torture" (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 2003) in *Justice Visions*, <https://static.prisonpolicy.org/scans/afsc/prison-in-side-prison.pdf> (accessed November 20, 2018).

19 Tammi Arford, "Captive Knowledge: Censorship and Control in Prison Libraries" (Ph.D. diss., Northeastern University, 2013).

"Our library hours are 3–5PM for 2 hours at a rate of 20 men per each half hour.

That's only 80 men per week out of 376 men; 296 men do not get to the library."

Library access is inconsistent across prisons; they vary from a few hours each week to several hours each day. Prison libraries may also close due to budget shortages, staffing shortages, or lockdowns (in which all prisoners are kept in their cells for 22–23 hours each day; lockdowns have been known to last months at a time.)¹⁸

Many decisions about prison libraries are made from the top down, at the state or prison level, and may not be based on the needs of the prisoners themselves.¹⁹ Some examples include the amount of library funding and how much time the superintendent allows each unit to browse the stacks.

Books to Prisoners APRIL 6th, 2015
C/O Left Bank Bookstore
92 Pike St Box "H"
Seattle, Wash. 98101

3001 South Emily Dr.
Beeville, TX 78102

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

"Books to Prisoners" has my permission to "Rewrite," TYPE and to Publish at their discretion, provided they stay within the guidelines established. I hope that this letter improves our understanding.

I'm 73 yrs., indigent, an avid reader with a love for good literature. I've read a large variety of everything from the (Bible) to (War & Peace) with a good helping of (Westerns, [Thrillers] and (Romance). Like my grandfather once said, "You can take the boy out of the country, but not the country out of the boy. In short, I'm just old EAST TEXAS COUNTRY BOY. I'm also a member of the "OLE EAST TIMERS BOOK CLUB." We try to supply books for all the men in our bldg. who do not have books to read. Of course there are several of us who try to help these people by keeping a small library of books in our lockers. We try to keep a wide variety of books for our readers. Some of us even specialize in a particular subject. Try to remember this best library in the world of classics is not worth the paper written on if it does not appeal to the reader.

Yes! We have a large library with a wide variety of books. About 2 yrs. back, we got a new librarian who was an expert in computers, literature, and procedures. Unfortunately, she had no common sense and only followed (Her Guidelines). She totally re-vamp our library by trashing approx. 2000 books that did not fit her criteria. "ALL PAPER BACKS, OLD, FADED, Dogeared, damaged in any way and any book not checked out in (3) months." We lost whole sections of books by great authors like John D. MacDonald. Our large ^{FILE} card was left out of the process and received no update in its' records. Strangely enough, we still have it, but it's useless as it's not maintained. In most libraries, you get to pull your own selections; but not here. We have a large counter that separates us from the books. Our library clerks have to pull our books for us as a security does not want us to have that kind of freedom. It's no small wonder that a lot of those books had not been checked out. Our hours are 3-5 PM for 2 hours at a rate of 20 men per each 1/2 hr. That's only 80 men per wk. Out 376 men, equals 296 men who do not get ^{to} the library. 1 day per week does get the job done. So we "The OLE TIMERS BOOK CLUB" try to make up the difference. Without the tremendous help provided by organizations like yours, this would not be possible. Trust me, your books are very much needed here and are appreciated by all of us. (OVER)

THERE IS a "Reader's Digest Book" with a novel entitled "I CHOOSE PRISON" by Warden James J. Bennett. This book gives a ~~very~~ history of "Penal System". It covers everything from Devil's Island to Alcatraz. For anybody interested in the Penal System, this book will give you some great insights. Don't let anybody kidd you; underneath it's still the same. You can still get your throat cut by sticking your nose where doesn't belong.

THEY have a educational program here that teaches you how to adapt to society. It also improves the basic education of a lot of inmates who are practically unable to read or write. Which is a large reflection ^{ON} the "Free world educational system". One of the classes they teach is a (C.I.P.) class called "Cognitive-Inner Pervention" which teaches a 6 step program based on the "Franklin Reality Model". This class teaches you to understand why and how ~~you~~ think the way you do. In the "Newspaper Journalism World" this is called the 6 big steps to good ~~Journal~~ Journalism; they are "THE WHO; WHAT; WHEN; WHERE; HOW and WHY." When you can answer these 6 big (?) about yourself, you can understand people and society a whole lot better. There is a cliché in society and especially in prison which states that "If I knew then, what I know now, I would not be here. When a class makes you understand yourself to prison of your own making for years. And all because you could not find the answers about yourself. So your punishment is to limit yourself and those who help you by putting yourself in a prison of your own making. Yes, 'I'm guilty of breaking the laws of God and man', with nobody to blame but myself. As Fontaine so nicely put it; "Each man is 3 men; the man you think you are; the man other people think you are; and the man you ~~think you are~~ really are.

It would be appreciated to have your response to this letter as I need to know for sure that you received this letter. It has been a strong possibility that our head supervisor of indigent mailed does not process our mail at her discretion. I know that's tapering with government mail, but by proving it, she seems to have the right to censor our mail based on a number of factors. As I am indigent and must go thru her department, I would like to know if you received this letter. THANK YOU!

Note: At the risk of being a critic of your system for mailing books. It would be to everybody's advantage to enlarge your book store and personnel to advance the number of deliveries per year. Also the type of books should be improved to meet the needs of the prisoners. Your cooperation will be appreciated as always.

THANK YOU!

“You have to fight to get a library pass, pay for it, or be friendly with the guard.”

Different prisons have different policies for frequency of library visits. Our surveys tell us that some are allowed to visit multiple times each week while other wait for months for their unit's turn to go.

Books to Prisoners Has
My permission to publish
this letter and anything
else I send.

To who it concerns:

To start out, the work yall do to getting books to prisoners all over is very much a blessing I thank God has given yall. I can't tell you about other prison's, but here in Texas and the one I am on which there are over a hundred of them ~~and~~ I might get to go to the library once a month. Here on John B Connolly unit, the guard will bring 15 passes every Thursday to pass out for the library and you have to fight nearly to get one, or pay for it, or be friendly with the guard. IF the guard at the library is not in a hurry to go home then you might get an hour to search for, look or read the paper or magazine but can't check them out. Now for these book stores like yourself around the country that send us books I can't say for others, but myself I wish I had the money to send every one that has something to do with them a \$100,000 dollars each. To me it is a piece of mind to be able to read books you like and I love writing. Now when I send out for what books I would like to read, I count the days, when my letter goes out until at mail time my books arrive. It's like way back when I had love ones that would send things to me to read, money and etc...

Now those days are gone and I rely on people like yourself that have a heart for us no accounts that one day we may have something accounts in this very sinful world. Now I could write a book on people I know that weren't angels and now they are ~~and~~ and it was other people that cared enough to show a little kindness so they could be. Now

about a year ago I finished my book I wrote that took me two years to finish because of where I am living caused me alot of set backs and time and money in here since I didn't have any help. The book is a Memoir autobiography of my life from the last years of school, joining the Marines, in and out of jails and one jail house, dealing with Satan, to joining up with Jesus, to serving 91 years for DWI I am not guilty of. The name of it is Life and Times of 99 and anyone can read it, just go to ^{WWW} Prisons Foundation.org and print my name in Bobby Turner and I believe you will read about a wild, poor and crazy play boy.

But who ever reads this letter and knows someone that might published it, so it can get to book ~~stores~~ stores on the shelves, please give them my address so we can get the ball rolling. Now if that happens I will personally send Books to Prisoners a copy of it autographed by yours truly, so you can brag that you knew a Famous writer from Texas. I do hope this Letter you can use to help out in any way other than myself for books I have received in the past that has brighten up my days. But before I go, just remember to take it easy, but take it all in Jesus Name.

P.S. I thank it's time again for some Westerns I have read the one you sent me last time about Four times now.

Yours Truly

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Kenedy, Tx 78119

“Our prison library has been
closed for two months now.”

* I GIVE PERMISSION FOR BOOKS TO PRISONERS TO PUBLISH THIS -
LETTER, AND TO USE MY REAL NAME AS WELL. *

DEAR FRIENDS @ BOOKS TO PRISONERS, 4-21-15

THE BOOKS YOU SENT ME WERE GREAT. I COULD NOT HAVE PICKED OUT BETTER ONES MY SELF. THE BOOKS YOU SEND TO ME HELP ME IN SO MANY WAYS. OUR PRISON LIBRARY HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR 2-MONTHS NOW, SO WITHOUT YOUR GENEROSITY I'D HAVE NOTHING TO READ. BY READING TO PASS TIME, IT KEEPS MY MIND IDLE. THEREFORE KEEPING ME OUT OF TROUBLE ASWELL. I AM IN SEGREGATION SO I HAVE NO T.V. TO WATCH, NO ONE TO PLAY DOMINOES WITH, ECT. YOUR BOOKS GIVE ME SOMETHING GOOD TO DO. I HATED TO READ WHEN I WAS IN SCHOOL. I NOW KNOW IT WAS NOT READING I HATED, BUT THE TOPIC'S. I NOW LOVE TO READ, THANKS TO YOU BECAUSE I'VE DISCOVERED WHAT I LIKE. YOU SENT ME BIOGRAPHIES AND AUTOBIOGRAPHS AND TRUE CRIME NOVELS. AND NOW I CAN NOT GET ENOUGH OF THESE TOPIC'S TO READ. I AM EXPANDING MY MIND, AND I BELIEVE BY READING IT'S HELPED MY GRAMMER. THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS, YOUR GENEROSITY, AND YOUR LOVE FOR SOMEONE YOU'VE NEVER MET. MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND YOURS IN ALL YOU DO.

SINCERLY, W@C

WILLIAM ORR #1563509

**"At virtually all penal facilities,
the library is the least-funded of
all programs."**

Each state accounts for prison library budgets differently.

Many prison librarians state that libraries in their facilities are poorly supported, and have been so for decades.²⁰ Inmates in correspondence with Books to Prisoners have described losing access to their libraries or watching them dwindle to nothing.

Books to Prisoners also receives many letters from prison chaplains begging for donations, and from librarians who describe using tape to rebind popular books that they don't have the money to replace.

August 2, 2015

Dennis Thomas (La.O.O.C.)
#533237

Winn Corr. Ctr. - DB2(2)

Winnfield, LA 71483-1435

Books to Prisoners % Left Bank Books

42 Pike St., Box A

Seattle, WA 98101

BOOKS TO PRISONERS HAS MY PERMISSION TO PUBLISH
AND TO USE MY NAME

The average person's potential for experience is limited. By this I mean that a typical person's interests far outnumber the actual experiencing of those interests. If that person is incarcerated, then that potential is virtually non-existent.

Book programs such as Books to Prisoners provide prisoners opportunities to experience life (albeit second-hand) via reading.

Whatever a person's interests, there is certain to be books about that topic. However, at virtually all penal facilities, the library is the least-funded of all programs. Without Books to Prisoners, I would not be able to expand beyond the narrow confines of my own day-to-day experiences. Every book I receive from Books to Prisoners is greatly appreciated, and I hope that people of means continue to provide their support for this program.

Dennis Thomas

“This unit is a TOC Mental Health Program and as such we are segregated completely from the rest of the prison. This includes the prison library...

Through the help of Books to Prisoners, the library has grown to over 200 books...”

Booke to prisoners has my permission to publish
this letter / as well as Left Hand Booke, Max A. Lockwood
Bank

Bank
To Left Hand Booke and the Booke to Prisoners volunteers!

As a prisoner, we find that we have alot of "free
time" on our hands and I know of no better way
of using that time then reading books!

This unit is a TOOC mental health program
and as such we are segregated completely from
the rest of prison. This includes the prison library.
With the help of our recreation therapist a small
amount of books were obtained from the prison library
and those first 50 books started our unit library.
Of which I am the Librarian.

We also received the names and addresses for
Booke to Prisoners program volunteers. Through this
program the library has grown to over 200 books. That
are available to all our unit inmates. We were
recently informed that a donation of 400-500 books is to
be made to our library from a person that heard of
our need through Booke to Prisoners!

Being able to leave this prison experience, even
briefly, through reading a book is a wonderful help to
our mental states as is true for regular compound
inmates as well.

As a Honorably discharged combat veteran I tend to
read and enjoy military and military history books both
fiction and non-fiction. However I enjoy farming/agriculture
books, plants and animal husbandry, any type of "how to"
books and U.S. history. I like educational type books out of
math, reading, ect.,

For pleasure reading, I enjoy the Bible and am enrolled in a Sunday course. I also enjoy science fiction and military fiction stories like Out of the Ashes series by William Johnston, Dragon Riders of Pern by Anne McCaffrey and Clan of the Cave Bear by Jean Auel.

As a writer, westerns, science fantasy, mystery and as can be expected of inmate creative stories.

Bank

I thank you to Leftland Books, the volunteers and the people who donate to The Books to Prisoners program! I am sorry that all I can offer is a simple "thank you" for such an immense gift your program gives us!

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Henning, TN, 38041-1150

You may use my entire name if you need.

P.S. Keep the books coming! Thank you!

P.P.S. I apologize for getting your name wrong, Leftland instead of Left Bank.



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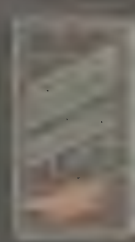
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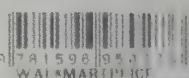


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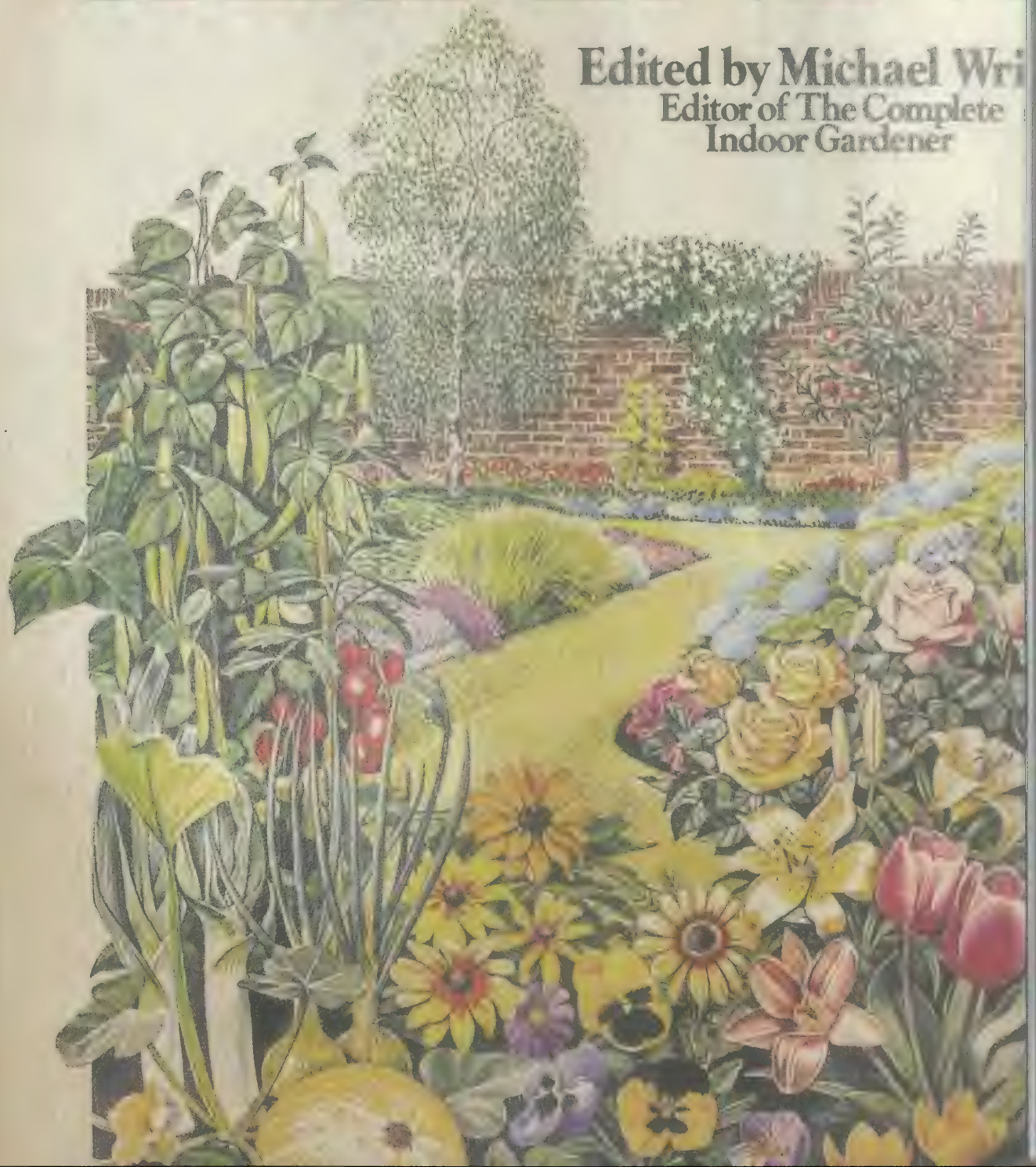
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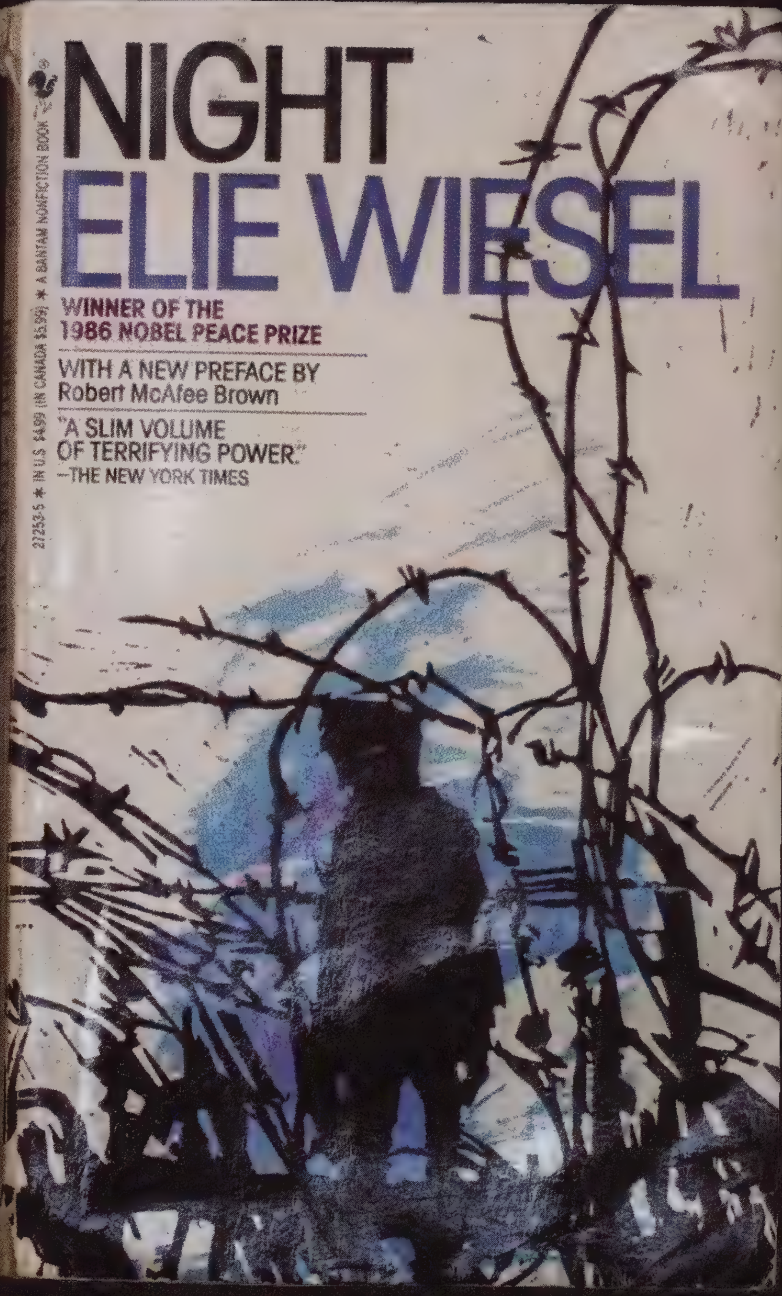
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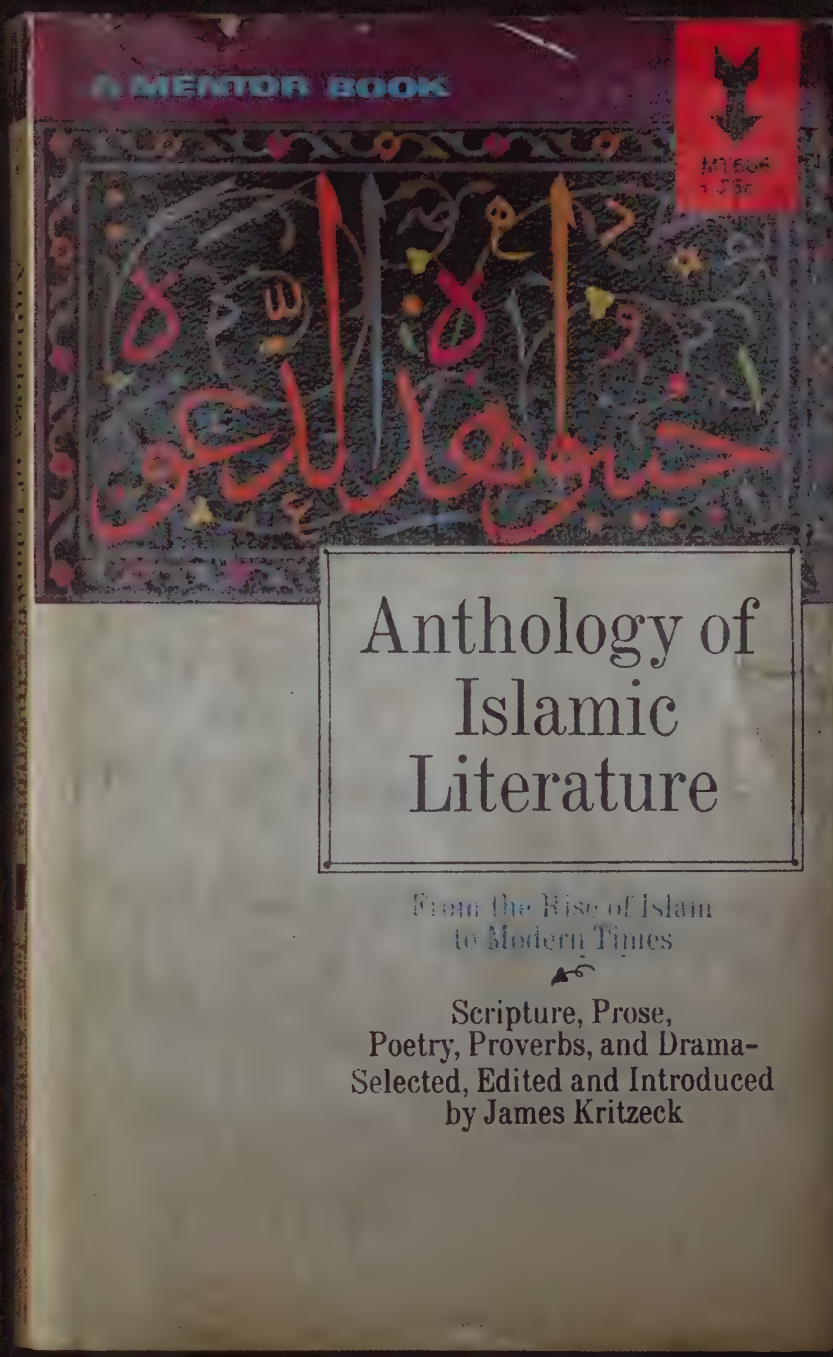
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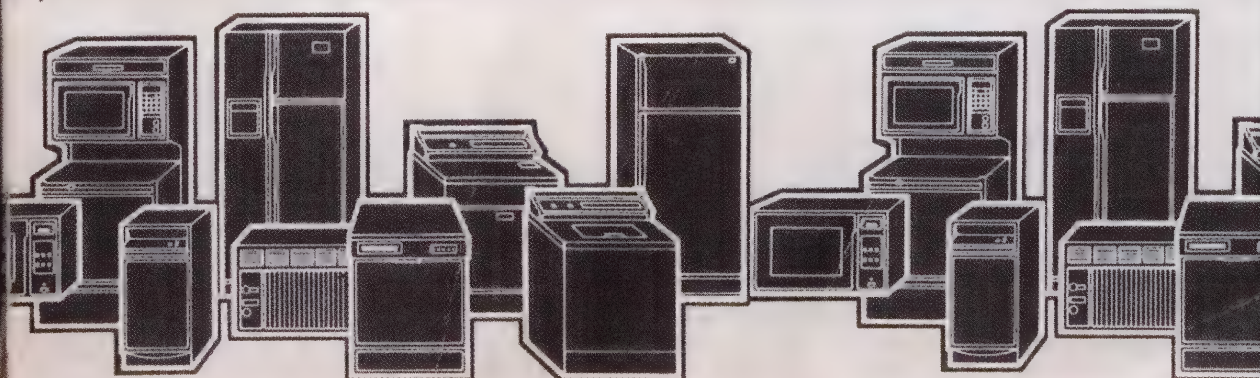


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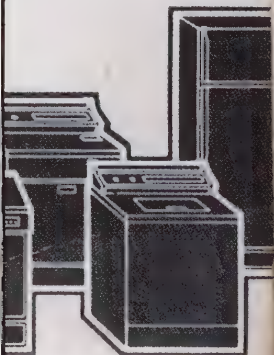
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AFTERWORD

As I write, I have volunteered with Books to Prisoners for a little over half of its existence. I'm not alone in this longevity. Since being established in (or slightly before) 1973, BTP has retained many of its volunteers for years or even decades. The reasons for this are of course complex and personal, but I feel confident in saying that any of our longer-term volunteers value the simplicity and immediacy of the BTP mission, and are humbled by the evidence of the impact BTP has had on thousands of lives. This impact has been as simple as brightening the day of someone locked in a 6 x 8 foot cell for 23 ½ hours a day. But there have been much deeper effects. In some cases a book has sparked a dormant love of reading that has led to a fresh approach to life inside and subsequently outside of prison walls. In other cases it has reminded a person abandoned and despised by friends and family that someone somewhere still recognizes their humanity.

From when I started volunteering in 1994, the number of requests Books to Prisoners has received has grown from around 6,500 per year to over 14,000 in 2015. This is an enormous workload increase for a small, low-income nonprofit that sputtered into life more than four decades ago as a small band of radicals and anarchists supporting a similarly small band of political prisoners in the U.S. In the intervening decades the mission has broadened and so has the volunteer base. Many hundreds of people who may otherwise have had no direct point of contact with the criminal justice system have been exposed to prison issues as a result of volunteering with BTP, from teens who may grow up to be the policy-makers of tomorrow, to aging Rotarians with previously fixed ideas of who is good and who is bad. And on the flip side, BTP has provided a venue for scores of people to do their court-ordered community service.

In all my years with Books to Prisoners there have been many high points and many challenges. How could I fail to be moved by a death row prisoner sending a last thank you before scheduled to be executed? How could I not feel conflicted on receiving a book request from a man convicted of murdering a former BTP volunteer?

At Books to Prisoners we affirm the humanity of all. We point out the injustices related to the American criminal justice system that imprisons a much higher proportion of its population than any other industrialized country, and treats people unequally according to their race or economic condition. We acknowledge that whether someone made a silly mistake or committed a heinous wrong, anyone can benefit from reading, and anyone can make changes for the positive. All it may take is just one book.

Written by Andy Chan, 2017.

Andy Chan has been volunteering at Books to Prisoners since 1994 and currently serves as its president. He is also a programmer and juror for the Seattle Social Justice Film Festival. He holds a PhD in political science and government from the University of Bristol.

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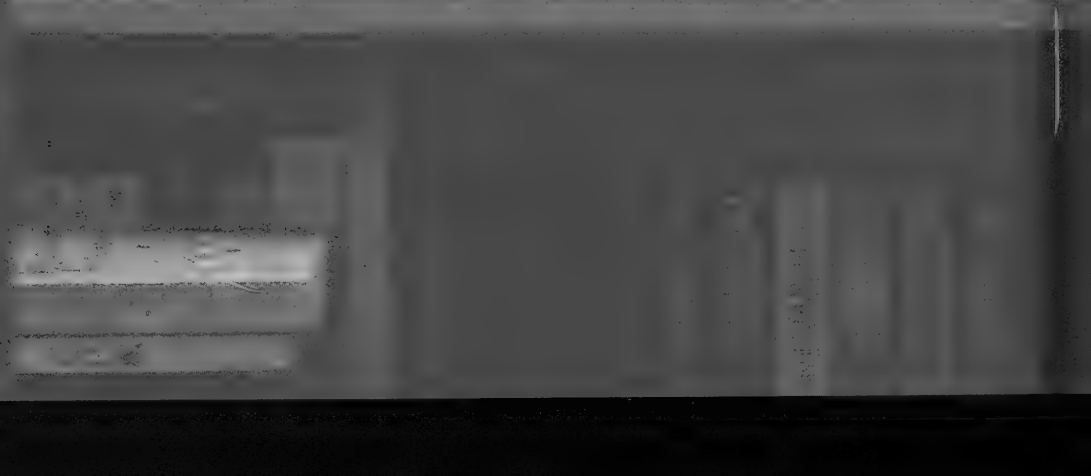
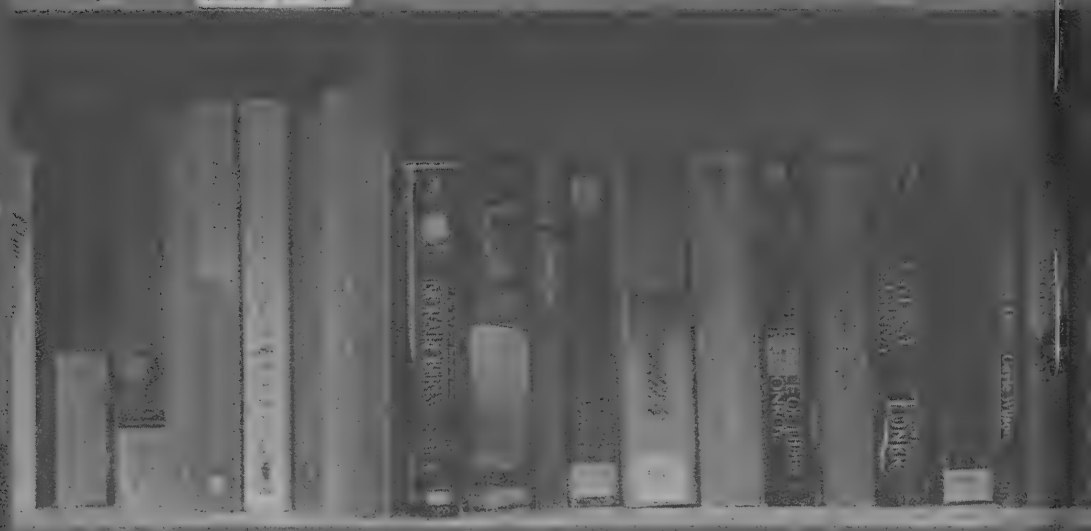
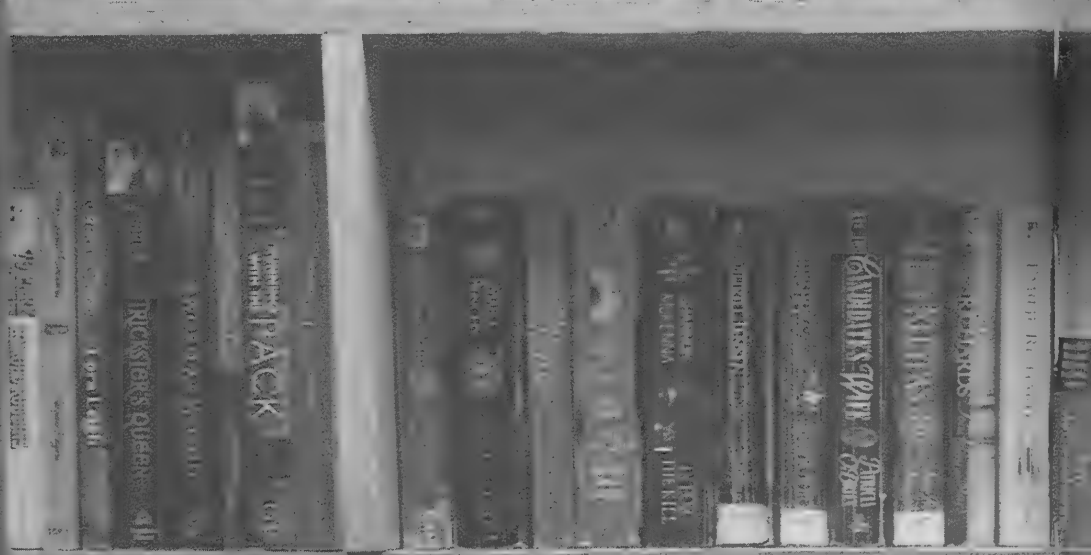
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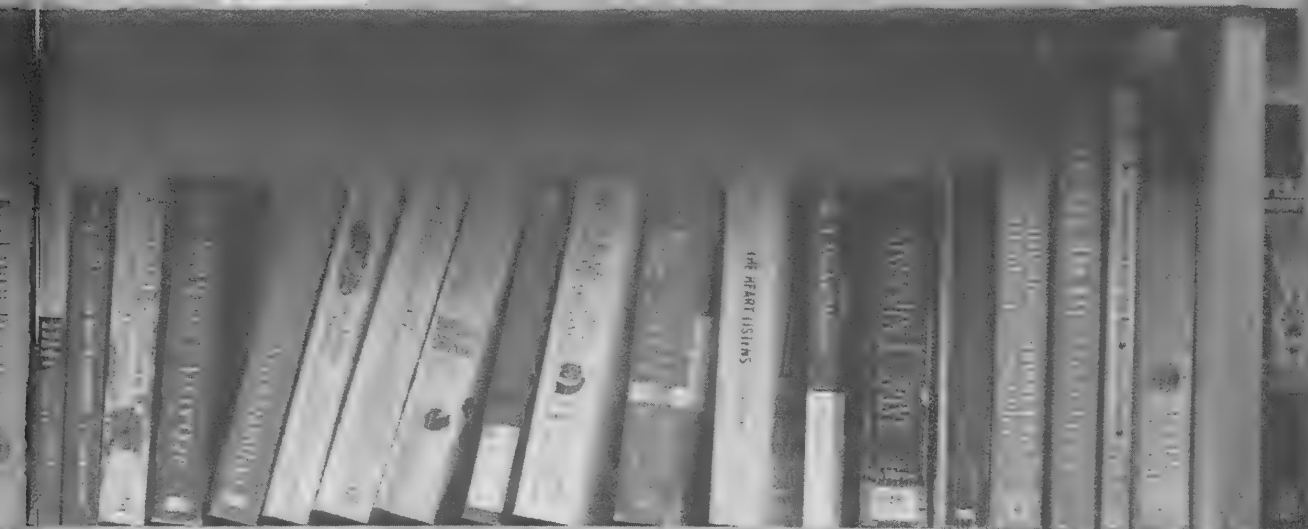
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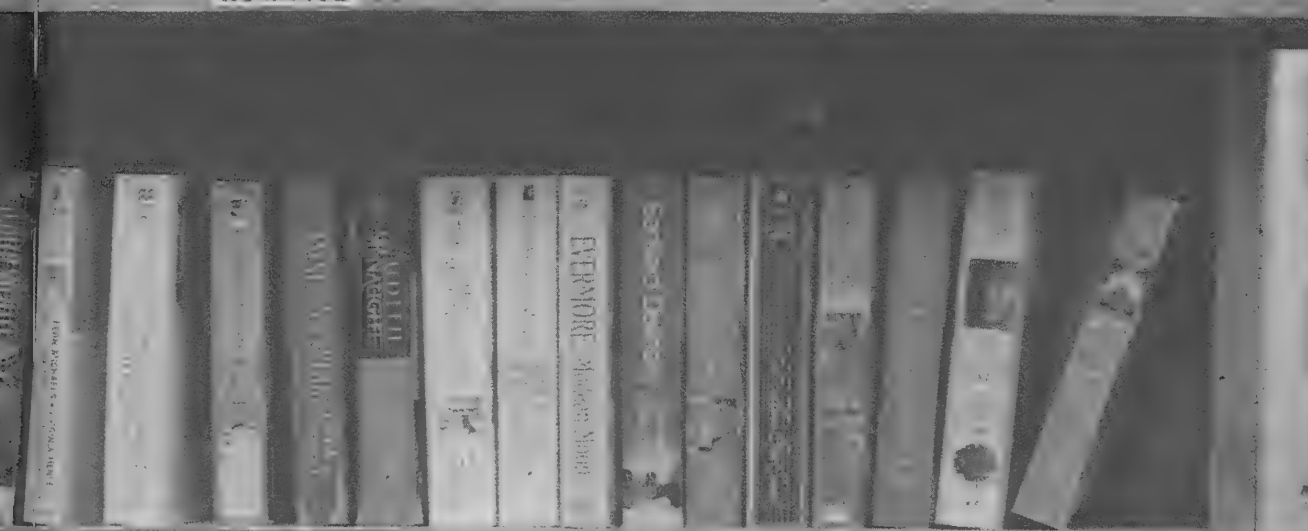




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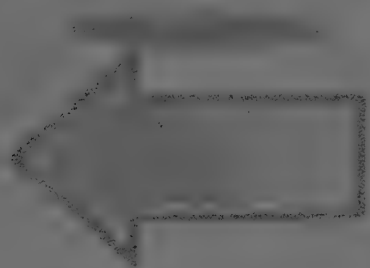
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DEAR BOOKS TO PRISONERS: LETTERS FROM THE INCARCERATED is the result of a project initiated in the spring of 2015 as an effort to raise funds and awareness for the work being done at Books to Prisoners. It was compiled, edited, and designed in the summers of 2016, 2017, and 2018 with the generous funding and support of the RISD Maharam Fellowship.

Books to Prisoners would like to thank every individual involved in this project, including but not limited to the volunteers, the keyholders, the essay writers, and editors. Most importantly, we would like to thank the inmates who generously contributed their letters to this publication. We thank you for your courage.

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